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Dear Mr. President,

The Australian trade union movement strongly condemns the brutal repression of the Colombian people who have exercised their right to freedom of expression and assembly against the tax reform bill and the neoliberal policies of your Government. Working people, led by an alliance of trade unions and social groups, have taken to the streets every day since 28 April to oppose the tax reform bill which would deepen inequality by disproportionately impacting workers and the poor who were already struggling with the economic impact of COVID-19.

According to the information we have received, a vicious military escalation has taken place in which state repressive agencies – the National Police and the Anti-Riot Squad (ESMAD) – have intimidated, persecuted, repressed, injured and murdered union and social movement leaders, and are indiscriminately targeting the general public.

To date, according to the reports from different human rights organisations, there have been more than 1089 cases of violence, 726 arbitrary detentions, 28 protesters killed, 234 wounded, 5 demonstrators disappeared, 12 people with ocular mutilation and 6 women raped by ESMAD soldiers.

Your announcement of the withdrawal of the tax reform bill is a triumph for the trade union and social movements leading the demonstrations, but it does not satisfy the demands of the Colombian people as your Government has immediately proposed another tax reform bill. We call on your Government to meet the demands of the Colombian people for:

- Demilitarisation of the urban areas and cities
- Dismantling of ESMAD
- Punishment for those responsible for the brutal repression against demonstrators
- Guarantees for the right of peaceful protest
- Negotiations over the Unified Emergency Plan with the National Strike Committee.

The Australian union movement stands in solidarity with the workers in Colombia who have taken the brave decision to continue with peaceful demonstrations in line with the decisions of the National Strike Committee (Comité Nacional del Paro). Colombia is already the most dangerous place in the world to be a trade unionist, with more than 3000 trade unionists murdered since 1989. Most of these crimes remain unresolved as your Government has failed to address the culture of impunity while the justice system remains dysfunctional and under-resourced.

We urge your Government to meet the demands of the Colombian people, uphold the right of workers to freedom of association and freedom of assembly, and bring the perpetrators of violence to account. The Australian union movement will continue to closely monitor the workers' rights situation in your country and I look forward to your response to the issues raised in this correspondence.

Yours sincerely



Michele O'Neil

**President**

**ACTU**

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