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David Newby
President, Wisconsin
Fair Trade Coalition;
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Wisconsin AFL-CIO

Mark Pocan
Member, U.S. Congress

Organizations listed for
identification purposes only

June 6, 2016

President Juan Manuel Santos
Palacio Narino
Bogota, D.C.
Colombia

Doctor Juan Fernando Cristo
Minister of Interior
Bogota, D.C.
Colombia

Doctor Luis Carlos Villegas
Minister of Defense
Bogota, D.C.
Colombia

Dear President Santos and Ministers Cristo and Villegas:

We write on behalf of the members of the Colombia Support Network (CSN), a human rights organization based in the United States, and on behalf of the thousands of persons who receive and support our messages. We write to you to express our great concern for the participants in the Minga Nacional currently underway throughout much of Colombia, and in defense of the right of these campesinos, indigenous and Afro-Colombians to protest government programs and policies with which they disagree. The participants in the Minga are exercising their right to peaceful public protest, guaranteed by Article 37 of the Colombian Constitution. While peace talks are being held between the Colombian government's representatives and the FARC guerrillas, it is important that your government recognize the right of the Minga participants to express their concerns through public demonstrations. These concerns arise from the failure of the government to implement most of the points agreed to in the Agrarian Summit, where the leaders of the current protestors made clear their serious concerns about new government policy initiatives such as the ZIDRES plan and the focus on mining and other extractive industries which they reasonably believe constitute a threat to their communities and to the environment.



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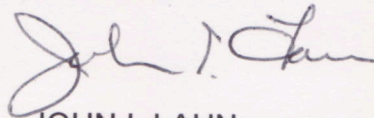
Dane County, WI

We are particularly concerned about the use of force against the peaceful protestors. Sending the Army and the ESMAD anti-riot police against the Minga participants as a militarized response to peaceful protest is wrong and violates their constitutionally-protected rights to speak freely and assemble in groups to protest government policies which are harmful to them. Already 3 persons have been killed and more than 100 have been injured by Army and ESMAD actions.

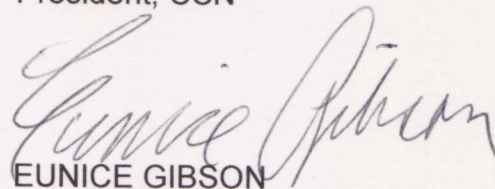
We call upon you to end the repressive actions of the Army and the ESMAD and agree to participate in discussions with representatives of the Minga to seek a solution, in good faith, to the concerns they have brought forward through the Agrarian Summit. At a time when your government is engaged in serious discussions with the FARC guerrillas to end more than 50 years of war, it is particularly inappropriate to repress expression of legitimate concerns by the campesinos, indigenous and Afro-Colombians being expressed through the Minga. And it is even less appropriate for members of your government to attempt falsely to link the peaceful Minga with the ELN guerrilla organization.

We request that you give urgent attention to the points we raise in this letter.

Sincerely,



JOHN I. LAUN
President, CSN



EUNICE GIBSON
Secretary, CSN

Copies to:

Colombian Constitutional Court
Fiscal General de Colombia
Secretary of State John Kerry
Senator Patrick Leahy
Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
International Criminal Court