

Colombia, January 25, 2019

**Pope Francis**

Vatican

*Re: Request for dialogical intervention with President Duque*

Respectful and fraternal greetings.

The various communities who have suffered and are suffering armed violence, and the church denominations and organizations with whom we are building peace against every adversity, coincide with you in your New Year message that “good policy-making serves peace.”

In that conviction, we have joined in condemning, as you did, the violent deaths of 21 young people at the police training headquarters in Bogotá. We have stated our solidarity and readiness to assist with the needs of their families as far as possible and also with the needs of the wounded and their families. We know that suffering causes violence: we have experienced people being displaced, missing, murdered or massacred.

We have similarly condemned the violent deaths of 10 social leaders this year, added to the scandal of the deaths of 100 social leaders during the current presidential term, and the deaths of more than 500 men and women whom have raised the voices of communities in the last five years.

Pope Francis, all these deaths call us to unite in protecting human life in the midst of our social differences, and as we know that President Duque is a Catholic and a believer, we ask you to speak to him again so that he might take account of our thoughts and feelings in his decision-making, which we now see as beginning a new cycle of violence. We still have time to stop this rebirth of new violent pains.

We believe that life must be preserved in States governed by the rule of law with judicial and social clarifications based on truth. Sadly, we must contend with an Attorney General who faces serious allegations of corruption, which casts doubt on what he says and does.

We believe that the damage caused to those affected and to society can be repaired, and the lives of those responsible rebuilt, only on the basis of truth and the possibility of dialogue. As was ratified on January 23<sup>rd</sup> on the plenary of the United Nations Security Council, when Colombia was urged to follow the path of peacebuilding and reconciliation on the basis of dialogue.

We are at a crisis point where the winds of war can produce devastating fires that intensify social and environmental exclusion and multiply the violent deaths, corruption and crimes of various kinds in our territories.

The churches and organizations that are aware of our situation bear witness to the soul which has been silenced by controls exerted by armed forces over our lives. We write our organizations' names in fear. This is a slow death. They are aware of the murders that have taken place and of the senseless bombardment, the further displacement of people, and the manner in which powerful groups continue to despoil the land or develop business projects in disregard of our rights and those of the environment.

Pope Francis, we invite you to use your good offices to talk with President Duque and ask him to reconsider his decisions which we believe show unawareness of what we are experiencing in the rural areas and on the margins of cities, as we stated in a letter sent to the Casa de Nariño in Bogotá last December 28.

The call to the country to unite in respecting life must be inclusive, in the face of all the violence and not just some, and be accompanied by public policies aimed at human safety.

The path of dialogue may be more exhausting, but it honors life, whereas force destroys, kills, wounds and deepens the scars left in the soul.

Mechanisms are being devised to negotiate humanitarian agreements with the ELN guerrillas in various regions of the country. Closing dialogue would return our country to a state of anxiety and uncertainty.

There are some points agreed upon in the table of conversations held with ELN that can be taken up again in order to agree one or more ceasefires. There are also guarantees and facilitators which, in the light of the tragic situation, are essential to protecting the possibility of dialogue.

If the current atmosphere inciting force, war and revenge continue to grow irrationally, we will be at the threshold of a new cycle of violence which will be more harrowing, perverse and damaging than any we have experienced.

The distressing event of the past week is encouraging the real modification of what was agreed upon between the State of Colombia and the current political party of FARC, justifying a new crusade against the peace agreement. Lies are being employed as happened with the plebiscite, making the peace agreed upon, with all its limits and imperfections, unsustainable and unviable.

Through your mediation, we call on the ELN, upon recognizing its responsibility in the distressing events, to renounce that type of action which causes suffering and serves as an argument for authoritarianism.

We ask you Pope Francis to appeal to President Duque, who honored the lives of the police officers and supported their families, so that in awareness of their shortened lives and the deaths of social leaders, FARC party members, police officers and soldiers, ELN combatants and criminal groups, the

path of dialogue towards peace may be reopened; we are all Colombian, after all. In order to prevent such tragic events, the dialogue should start from some kind of ceasefire or ceasefires.

We count on your spiritual strength and also on your spoken intervention.

In profound fear and distress for our fatherland and mother country of Colombia,

**Signed:**

**Communities:**

23 Humanitarian Zones and Biodiversity Zones, Curvaradó, (Chocó):

ADISPA as an organization that represents the 24 communities of the peasant farmer reserve zone “Zona de Reserva Campesina Perla Amazónica” (Putumayo):

AFAVIT, Asociación Familias Víctimas (Association of Families who are Victims), Trujillo, (Valle del Cauca).

ASEIMPOME, El Porvenir, Puerto Gaitán, (Meta).

Asociación de Familiares Víctimas de Ejecuciones Extrajudiciales (Association of Relatives of Victims of Extrajudicial Executions), Inzá municipality, Sembradores de Paz (Sowers of Peace) (Cauca).

Asociación de familias de Consejos Comunitarios de Cacarica, Autodeterminación, Vida, Dignidad, CAVIDA (Association of families of the Community Councils of Cacarica, Self-determination, Life, Dignity) , (Chocó).

Consejo Comunitario de Jiguamiandó (Community Council of Jiguamiandó)

Asociación de Mujeres Desplazadas, CLAMORES (Association of Displaced Women).

Asociación Familia Aljure (Association of the Aljure Family), Mapiripán, (Meta)

Comunidad Civil de Vida y Paz, CIVIPAZ (Civil Community of Life and Peace), El Castillo, (Meta).

Community of Agualongo.

Community of Angosturas.

Community of Bajo Cuembí.

Community of Bajo Lorenzo.

Community of Bajo Mansoyá.

Community of Baldío.

Community of Belén.

Community of Bocana de Cuembí.

Community of Buen Samaritano.

Community of Camios.

Community of Chufiyá.

Community of Comandante.

Community of Frontera.

Community of Guadalupe.

Community of Juvenil.

Community of La Alea.

Community of La Española.  
Community of La Piña.  
Community of La Rosa.  
Community of Playa Roja, Pedeguita and Mancilla, (Chocó).  
Community of Puerto Playa.  
Community of San Salvador.  
Community of Sevilla.  
Community of Toaya.  
Community of Vida and Trabajo La Balsita, Dabeiba (Antioquia).  
Community of Zamora.  
Comunidad Indígena del Resguardo Uradá Jiguamiandó (Indigenous Community of Uradá Jiguamiando), Carmen del Darién, (Chocó).  
Familiares de Víctimas de Lejanías (Relatives of the Victims of Lejanias), (Meta).  
Grupo de Familias de desaparecidos por paramilitares (Group of the families of those displaced by paramilitaries), Argelia, (Cauca).  
Juntas de Tamaná (Councils of Tamana), (Antioquia).  
Movimiento Campesino Cerro Negro (Peasant farmer movement of Cerro Negro), Sucre, (Cauca).  
Mujeres, Vida y Territorio (Women, Life, and Territory), Sucre, (Cauca).  
Red por la defensa del agua, la vida y el territorio (Network for defending water, life, and the territory), Inzá, (Cauca).  
Unión de Mujeres Demócratas (Union of Women for Democracy), (Meta).  
Voces que Trascienden (Voices that Transcend), Mapiripán, (Meta).  
Zona Humanitaria (Humanitarian Zone) Camelias.  
Zona Humanitaria (Humanitarian Zone) Caracolí.  
Zona Humanitaria (Humanitarian Zone) El Retorno.  
Zona Humanitaria (Humanitarian Zone) El Tesoro.  
Zona Humanitaria (Humanitarian Zone) Mi Tierra.  
Zonas Humanitarias y Zonas de Biodiversidad (Humanitarian Zones and Biodiversity Zones) Pedeguita y Mancilla, (Chocó) .  
Familias víctimas de la masacre de Rivera (Families of the victims of the Rivera massacre), (Huila)  
Víctimas de la masacre de La Chinita (Victims of the La Chinita massacre), Apartadó, (Antioquia)

**Organizations:**

Fundación Proyecto Vida (Life Project Foundation)  
Grupo Ecuménico de mujeres por la paz, Gempaz (Ecumenical Group of women for peace).  
Mesa Ecuménica por la Paz (Ecumenical Table for Peace).  
MOVICE Granada.  
MOVICE Meta.  
MOVICE Puerto Rico.  
MOVICE Vista Hermosa.  
Organización Colombiana de Pensionados, OCP (Colombian Organization of Pensioners).  
Unidos por la Paz Berlín (United for Peace Berlin)

Heike Hansel, Parlamentaria  
Carlos Hainsfurg  
Danilo Rueda

**Churches and Religious Organizations:**

Asociación Cristiana Menonita para Justicia, Paz y Acción No Violenta - JustaPaz. (Christian Mennonite Association for Justice, Peace, and Nonviolent Action)  
Congregación Hermanitas de la Asunción (Congregation of Little Sisters of the Assumption),  
Comunidad de Acogida (Host Community), (Bogotá).  
Iglesia Pentecostal de Camelias (Pentecostal Church of Camelias), (Chocó).  
Iglesia Presbiteriana de Camelias (Presbyterian Church of Camelias), (Chocó).  
Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz (Interchurch Commission for Justice and Peace)  
Diálogo Intereclesial por la Paz –DIPAZ- (Interchurch Dialogue for Peace)  
Comunidad Santo Tomás (Community of St. Thomas)

**Claretian Missionaries:**

Alfonso Prieto Guzmán.  
Arístides Menezes Canuto.  
César Augusto Espinoza Muñoz.  
Claudia Huircan.  
Coordinador de SOMI Claretianos de América (Coordinator of "SOMI" Claretians of America)  
Eguione Nogueira Ricardo.  
Fernando Ferrera.  
Fernando Guzmán.  
Francisco Andrés Ferrin Araujo.  
Ismael Montero Toyos.  
Ligia Cardozo Vargas.  
Henry Ramírez

**People of Churches and Faith-Based Organizations:**

Adaía Bernal Collazo, Menonita, Pastora de la Iglesia Hermandad en Cristo (Pastor of the Brethren in Christ Church), Bogotá.  
Andrés Felipe Agudelo Ochoa.  
Ángel Luis Rivera Agosto, Discípulos de Cristo (Disciples of Christ). "Ejecutivo para América Latina y el Caribe, Ministerios Globales" (Executive for Latin America and the Caribbean, Global Ministries).  
Angélica Bravo.  
Blanca Marina Rojas, Hermanitas de la Asunción (Little Sisters of the Assumption).  
Carlos Hainsfurg, Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter.  
Claudia Patricia López Rendón.  
David Humberto Quilodrán Yáñez.  
Edgar López, teólogo, Universidad Javeriana (theologian, Javeriana University)  
Elina Vargas, Barranquilla.

Francisco Antonio Rodríguez Montes.

Gloria Ulloa, Pastora Presbiteriana y Presidenta del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias Para América Latina y el Caribe (Presbyterian pastor and President of the World Council of Churches for Latin America and the Caribbean)

Heike Hänsel MdB, Stellvertretende Vorsitzende, Fraktion DIE LINKE im Bundestag.

Herlinda Vargas, Hermanitas de la Asunción (Little Sisters of the Assumption).

Sister Celia Avendaño, dominica presentación (The Dominican Sisters of the Presentation).

Sister Clara Lagos, Hijas de San José (Daughters of Saint Joseph).

Sister María Victoria Acevedo, Hermanas de San Juan Evangelista (Sisters of Saint John the Evangelist).

Sister Maritze Trigos, dominica presentación (The Dominican Sisters of the Presentation).

Sister Silvia Aristizábal López, Misionera Teresita (Missionary of St. Theresa).

Sister Silvia Aristizábal, Misioneras Teresitas (Missionary Sisters of St. Theresa).

Sister Sofía Rincón, dominica presentación (The Dominican Sisters of the Presentation).

Sister Zoila Cueto Villamán, Apostolado del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús (Apostolate of the Sacred Heart of Jesus).

Hilda Josefa Coronado Cubillos, Congregación Hermanitas de la Asunción (Congregation of the Little Sisters of the Assumption), Comunidad de Acogida (Host Community).

Inés Duque, MEP.

Jani Rita Silva, Putumayo.

Jenny Neme, Menonita (Mennonite).

John Hernández, pastor luterano (Lutheran pastor), Medellín.

José Alexander Gaitán Montes.

José Antonio Benítez Pineda.

Lina Hernández Nassif. Confraternidad Carcelaria de Colombia - Centro de Justicia y practicas restaurarías (Prison Fellowship of Colombia).

Luz Marina Londoño, Hermanitas de la Asunción (Little Sisters of the Assumption).

Malely Linares Sánchez.

María Cleide dos S. Oliveira.

María Cristina Umbarila Chacón, Iglesia Católica (Catholic church), member of GemPaz.

María Imelda Moreno A, Comunidad de la Misión (Community of the Mission).

Maria José Arregoces Ibarra, Berlín

Melby Yohana Suárez Tarazona, Hermanas de la Caridad de Santa Ana (The Sisters of Charity of St. Anne).

Milton Mejía, presbiteriano (Presbyterian).

Mónica Fernandez, Medellín.

Obispo Mauricio Torres Moreno, Iglesia misionera San Pablo viejos católicos en Colombia (Missionary Church of St. Paul).

Padre René Alexis Rey Luengas, presbyter of “provincia Eudista Minuto de Dios”

Pastora Isdalia Ortega. Comunidad Menonita (Mennonite Community).

René Alexis Rey Luengas, presbyter of “provincia eudista Minuto de Dios”, leader of the pastoral unit

Fundación Eudes.

Reverend Luz Amparo Chaguendo Ospina. Red de Mujeres Comisión de Paz- Cali (Peace Commission Network of Women)

Reverend Diego Higueta. Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia (Presbyterian Church of Colombia).

Reverend, Javier Barco. SEPAZ Foundation. Cali

Reverend Father Luis Felipe Oliveros Gómez, presbyter of “San Juan – Misión Anglicana”.

Reverend Sergio Talero, Evangelical Lutheran Church “El Divino Redentor,” (Bucaramanga).

Roberta de Freitas Theodossiou.

Santiago Espitia Fajardo, Iglesia Hermandad en Cristo de Colombia (Brethren in Christ Church).

Teresita Cano Gómez o.p.

Viviana Machuca, World Vision Colombia.

Yuris Contreras, Barranquilla.

Zaida Niño Contento.

Luz Alba Santoyo