

IN DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACY

A Declaration of the *Defend the Peace* Movement

(translation of the original and official Spanish document; words in brackets serve as further clarification and do not appear in the original document)

After the process and rejection of the presidential objections [to the JEP's statutory law] by the two chambers of the Colombian Congress, and the decision in which the JEP ruled in favor of the non-extradition guarantee for Mr. Jesus Santrich, leaders of the executive government's party have petitioned the President, Iván Duque Márquez, to declare a state of internal commotion to enforce exceptional measures.

Although government sources have ruled out this possibility, we consider it necessary to point out that in choosing that path, the President would be opting to destroy the foundations of the peace process, strike a blow against democracy, and inevitably turn towards the enthronement of totalitarian power.

In our convictions there will always be respect and compliance with judicial decisions, and that discrepancies with them must be dealt with in courts of law. However, in relation to the recent events, we draw attention to the contrast between the smooth way in which international cooperation was provided to the Attorney General's Office and not the JEP, the steps that were omitted by the ex-Attorney General, Nestor Humberto Martínez, to legalize proceedings in this process, and the concealment of material evidence that was presented after the decision of the [JEP] judges. While resolving his current legal situation and the possible conflicts of jurisdiction, it is up to the authorities to take all measures to protect the life and integrity of Mr. Santrich.

These facts generate the strong impression that everything that has happened seemed like a meticulously woven set of actions to provoke a crisis of the legitimacy of the JEP, cause serious damage to the peace process, induce the mistaken perception that a traumatic change has occurred in the operation of the extradition mechanism, and promote the feeling that there has been a situation of institutional chaos that can only be resolved with exceptional measures.

The real crisis does not emerge from decisions of the JEP or the ordinary justice system. The crisis in the country is being lived in the territories most affected by war, which after having first seen the peace dividends in 2017, now suffer the increase in homicides (social leaders and ex-guerrillas topping the list); forced displacements and landmine victims. The government has been unable to reach these territories with a security and territorial justice policy aimed at protecting the population, and with basic goods and services to promote rural development. In contrast, today it is known that the territories are reached with a [armed forces] policy that evaluates operational results [numbers of enemy casualties] that has the potential to return us to the worst times of the 'false positives' [the killing of innocent civilians and then presented as enemy combatants] era.

The Defend the Peace movement calls on citizens to debate judicial decisions in a democratic manner through the proper institutional channels, and to support the transformation of the territories most affected by the war, where the process of peace building is more fragile. We also thank and urge the agencies of the international community to redouble their indispensable accompaniment and observation required for the consolidation of the peace process in Colombia.