



## **SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE OF COLOMBIA: DENOUNCING U.S. IMPERIAL INTERVENTION IN A HISTORIC ELECTORAL PROCESS**

*June 20, 2026*

The Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America (CRLN) stands with Colombia at a critical moment in the country's democratic history. It is not hyperbole to say that much is at stake for the Latin America continent in these elections. Colombia has made historic advances toward peace, democracy, and social justice under the current government, but those gains remain fragile. The threat of rolling back this progress and returning to a politics of militarization, impunity, and oligarchical rule is very real. What happens in Colombia will resonate across the continent.

CRLN was present in Colombia during the first round of presidential elections on May 21, 2026, accompanying social movements and human rights defenders as part of an international delegation and serving as certified election observers with the Misión de Observación Electoral (MOE).

We are now preparing a second delegation of observers, and will again serve as international election observers during the presidential runoff on June 21, 2026. On election day, CRLN observers will be present at the Colombian Consulate in Chicago.

We reaffirm what we heard directly from Indigenous authorities, Afro-Colombian communities, labor organizers, women's movements, youth collectives, and human rights defenders: this electoral process is unfolding under intense pressure, including political violence, disinformation campaigns, clientelism, vote-buying by third actors, and coordinated attempts to distort and manipulate public opinion.

While Colombian institutions and the people continue to defend the electoral process, democracy cannot survive if it is undermined both by internal coercion and external interference.

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### **WE DENOUNCE FOREIGN INTERVENTION IN THE STRONGEST TERMS**

CRLN condemns the intervention of President Donald Trump and other U.S. political figures such as Senator Bernie Moreno (R-Ohio) and Representative María Elvira Salazar (R-Florida), who have openly inserted themselves into Colombia's electoral process, attempting to influence the political future of a sovereign nation. Such actions reflect a long history of U.S. imperial interference in Latin America, where democratic processes have too often been subordinated to Washington's political and economic interests. President Donald Trump has openly endorsed a candidate with documented and widely reported ties to paramilitary networks, and sought to influence Colombia's electoral process.

We are also troubled by the silence of senior U.S. officials, including Secretary of State Marco

Rubio, Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche, and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent. At a moment when Colombia's sovereignty is being challenged by external political pressure, their responsibility is not to enable or ignore interference, but to defend international norms of non-intervention and investigate credible allegations concerning the candidate receiving support from influential U.S. political figures.

These officials who have openly intervened in Colombia's electoral process have directly endorsed presidential candidate Abelardo de la Espriella, effectively transforming Colombia's democratic decision-making into an extension of U.S. domestic political agendas.

Reports of presidential statements implying that Colombia's access to U.S. political, economic, or security support could depend on the outcome of its election represent an unacceptable form of coercive diplomacy. This is not neutrality. It is pressure. It is interference. It is imperial conditioning of sovereignty.

Such actions violate the most basic principles of international law, self-determination, and non-intervention, and they reproduce a long and violent history of U.S. intervention in Latin America—where electoral outcomes have too often been treated as matters for external management rather than popular sovereignty.

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## A PATTERN OF IMPOSING POWER AND STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

The political elevation of a candidate with documented and widely reported ties to paramilitary networks, U.S.-designated terrorist organizations such as the AUC (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia / Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia), cannot be separated from this interventionist context.

The AUC were a far-right paramilitary and narco-trafficking organization responsible for some of the worst atrocities of Colombia's armed conflict, including massacres, assassinations, forced disappearances, torture, sexual violence, and the displacement of millions of people. Acting in defense of elite political and economic interests, the AUC terrorized labor organizers, campesino communities, Indigenous peoples, Afro-Colombian communities, and social movement leaders. The organization was designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the United States in 2001.

The documented record presented by journalists and legal investigations includes:

- Connections between the candidate and former leaders of the AUC, responsible for massacres, forced disappearances, sexual violence, and drug trafficking
- Opposition to Colombia's 2016 Peace Agreement and transitional justice mechanisms for victims
- Financial networks involving shell companies, real estate transactions in Florida, and associations with individuals under federal indictment in the United States



These are not minor controversies. They are indicators of a broader political project that normalizes impunity, weakens transitional justice, and reinforces violent structures of power.

Yet instead of respecting Colombia's sovereignty, senior U.S. officials have chosen to actively intervene on behalf of this political project.

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## **WE REJECT IMPERIALISM, WE DEFEND PEOPLES' SOVEREIGNTY**

This moment must be understood within the broader historical continuum of U.S. imperialism in Latin America—military coups, covert operations, economic warfare, and political interference that have repeatedly violated the right of peoples to determine their own futures.

Colombia's election is not a geopolitical instrument. It is not a bargaining chip. It is not an extension of U.S. foreign policy.

It belongs to the Colombian people—and only to them.

### **We categorically affirm:**

- Elections must be decided exclusively by the Colombian people
- All forms of foreign political interference—direct, indirect, coercive, or rhetorical—must cease immediately
- The use of U.S. political power to influence electoral outcomes in Latin America is unacceptable and must be denounced without ambiguity

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## **SOLIDARITY WITH THOSE DEFENDING LIFE AND DEMOCRACY**

We stand in unwavering solidarity with Colombia's social movements, Indigenous peoples, Afro-Colombian communities, workers, women, youth, faith leaders, and human rights defenders who continue to defend democracy under conditions of violence, inequality, and external pressure.

Their struggle is not only for an election. It is for historical memory, territorial dignity, peace with justice, and liberation from both internal repression and external domination.

The future of Colombia belongs to the Colombian people.

Not Washington. Not political elites. Not imperial interests.

CRLN stands with the people.