



**THE BIBLICAL MENNONITE SEMINARY OF  
COLOMBIA and THE MENNONITE CHRISTIAN  
ASSOCIATION FOR JUSTICE, PEACE, AND  
NONVIOLENT ACTION - JUSTAPAZ**

**Statement:**

**Support for the National Strike (“Paro Nacional”) and the right to peaceful social protest**

The Biblical Mennonite Seminary of Colombia and the Mennonite Christian Association for Justice, Peace, and Nonviolent Action - Justapaz, as establishments and ministries of the Mennonite Church in Colombia, join in solidarity and support the legitimate reasons for the National Strike and the demonstrations that have been taking place since April 28<sup>th</sup> of this year.

It is necessary and urgent for us to speak into the social situation of the country: to insist on the ideals of social justice that are at the center of the message of the Gospel of Peace as well as to denounce the violent actions against those peacefully marching in the streets to protest and take part in social demonstrations, thereby threatening their life and dignity.

As church institutions within the Anabaptist tradition who are also engaged in peacebuilding efforts, we are committed to biblical peace and public advocacy. We understand that the theological and ethical criteria of nonviolence and conflict transformation are fundamental factors in moving towards reconciliation coupled with social justice. Christian peace is God's Shalom, that is, a sign of integral well-being and relationships based on justice and equity, both for human beings and for all of creation.

Guided by this spirit and the principles of the Gospel of Peace and social justice, we urge the Government and civil society to pursue and deepen dialogue and negotiation on policies that will guide us towards equitable development, just peace, and full respect for human rights. We join in prayer, solidarity, and support for the social movement promoting the National Strike. We also recognize the youth movements, women peacebuilders, union members, peace churches, educators, various peace and human rights platforms, and all the diverse grassroots movements that are promoting life, peace, and justice.

It is with a prophetic posture that we also join in denouncing the violent acts committed against those who are participating peacefully in the marches. We urge the National Government NOT to stigmatize demonstrations and social protest.

It was only after Christianity was established as the official religion of the Roman Empire in the 4<sup>th</sup> century that a shift in values occurred: people began to think that obeying the Emperor was the same as obeying God. Thus, the concept of God's Shalom was replaced by Pax Romana; military power displaced the peace that Jesus had preached, and Caesar (the Emperor) became Lord (Kyrios) rather than Jesus of Nazareth.



In keeping with the principles of the Gospel of Peace, and staying true to our Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, we do not support any act that generates violence or attacks human life or dignity: no form of violence can be legitimized.

We believe that the persuasive power of love is a reason to cultivate hope and can open spaces for the different actors to reach negotiated solutions and thereby prioritize dialogue. As an example, Menno Simons, one of the founders of the Anabaptist movement, exhorted Christian judges to consider the power and fear of God, listening to and obeying the Word of God rather than the word of the emperor.

**SEMINARIO BÍBLICO MENONITA DE  
COLOMBIA**

**ASOCIACIÓN CRISTIANA MENONITA  
PARA JUSTICIA PAZ Y ACCIÓN  
NOVIOLENTA - JUSTAPAZ**