

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1304

May 25, 2022

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We write today in support of safeguarding the democratic process in Colombia, as a key U.S. partner in Latin America, and one of Latin America's oldest democracies. Unfortunately, as Colombia's presidential election approaches, these shared democratic values are increasingly under threat. We ask that the United States reaffirm its policy of respecting the outcome of free and fair elections while defending the safety and security of their participants.

The *Pacto Histórico* coalition's presidential ticket, which includes Gustavo Petro and Francia Márquez, is leading in several polls. However, on May 2 the coalition's campaign suspended its operations in Colombia's *Eje Cafetero* region, reporting that it had learned of a credible plot to assassinate presidential candidate Petro and vice-presidential candidate Márquez, who had already received multiple death threats and survived an assassination attempt in 2019. Though Colombian Interior Minister Daniel Palacios has announced plans to provide Mr. Petro with additional security, we remain vigilant of credible threats against presidential candidates.

In addition, after the March 13 legislative elections, poll watchers and political parties discovered hundreds of thousands of uncounted ballots. The Office of the Registrar, in charge of administering elections, initially responded by suggesting a recount that had no basis in law and was forced to withdraw its proposal. These irregularities set a troublesome precedent for more attempts to hinder Colombia's democratic process.

This year's presidential election also marks notable progress in the advancement of racially diverse candidates, with five Afro-Colombian vice-presidential candidates on the ballot: Francia Márquez, Luis Gilberto Murillo, Marelen Castillo, Sandra de las Lajas Torres, and Ceferino Mosquera. More Colombians are expected to vote than ever before, including increased participation from marginalized communities. We believe that achieving the peace and prosperity that Colombians have worked so hard for requires not only that the halls of power be accessible to minorities long excluded from power, but also that free and fair elections be held, in which candidates are free to campaign without intimidation, and in which every vote is counted.

Given Colombia's troubling history of political violence and the upcoming election's crucial role in ensuring the country's democratic foundations, we respectfully request that you convey our concerns to the Colombian government, maintain a posture of impartiality and respect regarding Colombian voters' decisions, and call on authorities to ensure a free and fair election without political violence and with robust protections for the safety of its candidates and voters.

Sincerely,



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



Jamaal Bowman
Member of Congress



Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress



Cori Bush
Member of Congress



Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



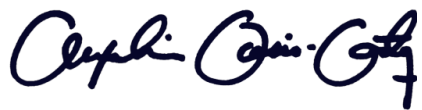
Andy Levin
Member of Congress



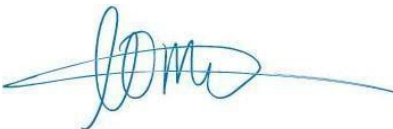
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress



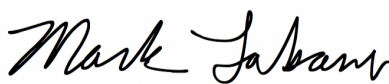
Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Mark Takano
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



Nydia Velázquez
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



Maxine Waters
Member of Congress



Susan Wild
Member of Congress