



28 JUNE 2023

Mairead Lavery
President and Chief Executive Officer
Export Development Canada
150 Slater St., Ottawa, ON K1A 1K3
mlavery@edc.ca

RE: Export Development Canada's Involvement in Colombia

Dear Ms. Lavery,

Thank you for your response and outlining EDC's position regarding some of our questions. We are glad to hear that EDC will no longer provide financing to fossil fuel companies and appreciate your recognition of the importance of human rights defenders.

We certainly recognize that there are many realities occurring simultaneously in Colombia and, of late, there is reason to be optimistic about the future. President Gustavo Petro's new government has demonstrated a commitment to standing with defenders of Indigenous land and water in Colombia, through actions such as the signing of the Escazu Accord.¹ We want to stand with defenders in this time of hope, not only in crises. Many Colombian human rights defenders are collaborating with their new government to establish a safer, more supportive environment for their vital work, but ending the violence they face will take time. We believe that our role in Canada is to listen to those who defend Indigenous land and water, and stand in solidarity with them as they do this lifesaving work; we have no right to make their work harder by bringing in more foreign investment and resource extraction, both of which have been linked to the violence they are facing.

We must once more echo the words of those land and water defenders on the front-lines of protecting human and environmental rights in Colombia: **#NosEstanMatando** – **#TheyAreKillingUs**. EDC must recognize that Colombia is the deadliest country in the world for human rights defenders, with nearly 200 activists killed in 2022 alone². With dozens of rights defenders having been killed in 2023 already, we are dismayed that the severity of these facts, and those outlined in our initial letter, do not appear to have sunk in for EDC. It is our position that the reality of Colombian human rights defenders is being glossed over by EDC's demeanour and the general tone of your response. This feeling has been amplified by an apparent lack of action from EDC regarding concerns we have raised in previous communications. For example,

¹<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/11/11/colombias-signing-of-escazu-accord-brings-hope-to-land-defenders>

² <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/apr/04/colombia-human-rights-defenders-killings-2022>



in relation to the Hidroitango hydroelectric project, which we mentioned in our July 29, 2022 letter to you, you have provided policy statements, but we have not been made aware of concrete compensatory damages or assistance to the impacted communities. Similarly, in relation to the crucial principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), you told us that you are guided by the UNDRIP and the IFC Performance Standards, but you have not provided us with any examples of where and how you have implemented FPIC.

While the industries of mining, metals, oil and gas are highlighted on your country profile for Colombia, there is not a single reference to the deliberate attack on land and water defenders in your [overview](#). Indeed, the only reference to human rights on this page situates Colombia as open and therefore in compliance with your review. As EDC has explicitly said: you are actively pursuing business in Colombia and mining is of strategic importance. This policy, in conjunction with actively ignoring credible and severe human rights abuses, sets the tone for the Canadian extractive industry abroad and leaves the door open to future investments that risk human rights. Therefore, after much discussion and reflection, the members of Amnesty International Ottawa-Gatineau and the National Environmental Human Rights Defenders group are requesting that **EDC change Colombia's status from "Open" to "Open on restricted basis"** and to officially recognize just how dire the situation is. Colombia land and water defenders are putting their lives on the line to defend us all and we hope that EDC can take this small action to show that Canada stands with them.

We look forward to your response to this request.

Yours sincerely and respectfully,

Anneka Spice, on behalf of Amnesty members on the National Environmental Human Rights Defenders Team

Brandon Boyd, on behalf of Amnesty community group activists from [Ottawa and Gatineau](#)

CC:

- The Honourable Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development): mary.ng@parl.gc.ca
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- Kyle Seeback (Conservative — Shadow Minister for International Trade): Kyle.Seeback@parl.gc.ca
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- Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (porte-parole pour le Bloc Québécois en matière de Commerce international — Bloc Québécois spokesperson for International Trade): Simon-Pierre.Savard-Tremblay@parl.gc.ca
- Elizabeth May (Parliamentary Leader of the Green Party of Canada): elizabeth.may@parl.gc.ca