

José Miguel Vivanco
Americas director
Human Rights Watch

3 June 2021

Re: Review of visual evidence in relation to ongoing protests in Colombia

Dear Mr Vivanco,

Following your request to conduct an independent expert evaluation of photographs in relation to individuals allegedly injured by law enforcement and security personnel during the ongoing protests in Colombia, the **International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT)** hereby provides our expert opinion. Comprising of 162 rehabilitation centres in 75 countries, the IRCT is the world's leading centre of knowledge on the physical and psychological effects of torture and ill-treatment.

Upon your request, we also asked a member of the **Independent Forensic Expert Group (IFEG)** – *retired Prof Dr Sidsel Rodge* – to conduct a comprehensive review of provided materials. The IFEG is an international body of 42 preeminent independent forensic specialists from 23 countries, who are recognised global leaders in the medico-legal investigation of torture and ill-treatment.

In summary, the **visual evidence suggests:**

1. that live ammunition is being used on and has caused the death of individuals, who have injuries typical of or consistent with gunshot wounds; and
2. that crowd-control weapons, namely teargas and kinetic impact projectiles (possibly 15mm round munitions) are being misused, causing death and severe injury including blunt trauma to eyes leading to loss of vision respectively.

Our findings in individual cases follows:

1. Kevin Antoni Agudelo:

A lesion on the upper side of his thorax surrounded by pinkish discoloration with slight abrasion in the edge is typical of a gunshot entrance wound. The bullet likely entered the thoracic cavity, damaging his thoracic organs. Another lesion on his left upper arm/shoulder is consistent with gunshot injury.

2. Brayan Fernando Niño Araque:

The lesion on his right eye is consistent with impact of a teargas canister. While death is not typical, it often occurs particularly when canisters are fired directly at individuals' heads. In these cases, death may occur from cerebral injury due to the impact and possible parts of a fractured skull. We have encountered many recent examples of this in other countries.

3. Santiago Andrés Murillo:

A round lesion close to the midline on the left side of his thorax is surrounded by a pink discoloration and the margin has an abrasion ring consistent with a gunshot entrance wound. The location suggests damage to the lungs, vessels and the heart and is likely to have caused his death.

4. Nicolás Saavedra:

Lesions on his body/skin are consistent with blunt force injury caused by the impact of a round munition possibly approximately 15mm in size, which may have caused the blunt trauma to his eye. Blunt trauma to the eye can cause eyeball rupture, haemorrhage or even retinal detachment leading to loss of sight.

5. Juan Rojas & Fernando Espinosa:

Lesions have well-defined 'tramline' type margins demonstrating the 'edge' of the round object. They are typical of blunt force trauma caused by the impact of a small round munition possibly approximately 15mm in size.

We remain at your disposition should you have any questions.

Yours truly,



Prof James Lin

Istanbul Protocol Programme Coordinator, International Rehabilitation Council
for Torture Victims

Coordinator, Independent Forensic Expert Group

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