

FIDH calls on the Government of the United States to stop instrumentalizing the fight against drugs to justify unilateral actions and disproportionate uses of force in Latin America

CONSIDERING

That 4th paragraph of Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations states that “All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations”;

That the escalation of hostility by the United States against democracies in Latin America and the Caribbean has exceeded the limits of diplomacy and international law;

That since the beginning of the current administration, the Federal Government of the United States has used economic pressure as a means to force the alignment of national governments it considers hostile or distant from its strategic objectives, disregarding the sovereignty and self-determination of peoples;

That at the beginning of August 2025, several U.S. media outlets revealed the existence of a secret directive issued by the United States Department of War, authorizing, without the proper approval of Congress, the use of military force against certain Latin American drug cartels—a document providing an official basis for the potential conduct of military operations in foreign territories;

That, in parallel, since the end of August 2025, the United States Navy has established a significant military presence in the southern Caribbean Sea through the deployment of naval and air units, and that on October 24 the Pentagon announced the deployment of the aircraft carrier *Gerald Ford*, the largest of the U.S. fleet, in the Caribbean Sea—thus constantly and persistently increasing its military presence in the region. This mobilization constitutes the largest show of military power by that country in Latin America in decades, carried out under the pretext of an alleged anti-drug operation;

That between September 2 and October 24, 2025, U.S. military units deployed in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean carried out approximately ten (10) armed attacks against vessels that, according to official statements by the U.S. Government, were allegedly transporting narcotics, resulting in the deaths of at least 43 individuals, without any independent verification confirming the nature of the attacked vessels’ activities. Journalistic investigations have shown that some of these boats were Colombian-flagged and crewed by unarmed civilians who at no time exhibited hostile behavior;

That such bombings, being indiscriminate attacks on vessels, constitute an illegitimate and unlawful use of force and a flagrant violation of the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality, and precaution. These actions contravene fundamental norms of international law, such as the obligation to guarantee rights including life, personal integrity, due process, and judicial guarantees, thus amounting to extrajudicial executions in open breach of international human rights obligations;

That on October 18, 2025, the President of the United States made irresponsible and unfounded statements, describing the President of Colombia as “a drug lord encouraging massive drug production,” and consequently ordered the suspension of economic transfers to the Colombian State under existing military and economic cooperation agreements;

That on October 24, 2025, the U.S. Department of the Treasury included the President of Colombia, Gustavo Petro, several of his relatives, and the Minister of the Interior on the OFAC Specially Designated Nationals list. This measure,

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entailing the freezing of financial transactions and restrictions on mobility and travel, constitutes a serious violation of human rights and an affront to the dignity of the Head of State and citizen. The official justification for sanctioning President Petro for alleged drug-trafficking links lacks clear grounds and undermines the basic principles of the presumption of innocence and due process, eroding the rule of law and universally recognized fundamental guarantees;

That these acts, together with the aforementioned military operations, represent an escalation of hostilities against the territorial sovereignty of Latin American nations. Such actions constitute a disproportionate use of force and gravely violate fundamental principles of international law, including differentiation, non-intervention, and the self-determination of peoples, and amount to undue interference in the internal affairs of Colombia during a particularly sensitive electoral period;

That the instrumentalization of the fight against drugs by the United States Government to justify unilateral actions and disproportionate use of force represents a dangerous trend that requires a firm response from the international community.

Therefore, the FIDH, in its capacity as the highest global forum for the promotion and defense of human rights, urges :

The Government of the United States:

1. To immediately cease all acts of threat, economic or political coercion, and interference that restrict the autonomy of Latin American peoples, as well as any defamatory statements against their democratically and legitimately constituted governments.
2. To urgently reconsider its global strategy on the drug problem, recognizing the failure of militarized and security-based approaches, which have not only caused serious human rights violations against civilian populations but also deepened poverty, inequality, and the systematic criminalization of Latin American peoples.
3. To adopt a public health approach to addressing drug consumption, assuming its historical responsibility in reducing domestic demand, given that the United States is the world's main consumer market. Likewise, to effectively strengthen mechanisms for controlling, identifying, and sanctioning illicit capital flows originating from its territory—the principal financial engine of global drug trafficking.
4. To acknowledge its responsibility for the illegal trafficking of arms into Latin America, promoting strict regulation over the possession and commercialization of firearms within its territory, as these constitute the main source of supply for criminal organizations in the region.
5. To initiate the immediate withdrawal of its deployed military units from the region, respecting the territorial sovereignty of Latin American States and redirecting its cooperation toward strategies grounded in real evidence concerning the financial, political, and social dynamics of organized crime.
6. To refrain from using unilateral and extraterritorial instruments, such as economic sanctions lists, against Heads of State and high officials of democratically elected governments, as these constitute acts of interference in violation of international law.

The United Nations:

7. To urge the competent international mechanisms to assess the possible international responsibility of the United States for breaching the prohibition of the threat or use of force in international relations, taking into account all acts of diplomatic, economic, and military hostility undertaken in the past three months.