



Colombian Caravana
59-60 Russell Square
London WC1B 4HR
United Kingdom

Señor Juan Manuel Santos Calderón
President of the Republic of Colombia
Carrera 8 No. 7 – 26
Palacio de Nariño
Bogotá
Colombia

16 July 2014

KDK/SG 0005.1

Dear President Santos

Murder of Luis Evelio Londoño

I am writing on behalf of the UK members of the International Caravana of Jurists, in respect of the murder of Luis Evelio Londoño on 21 June last week. During visits to Colombia in 2008, 2010 and 2012 we called upon the Colombian government to protect lawyers' ability to represent their clients without fear of harassment or recriminations of any kind, and to refrain from any interference in their work in order to comply with Colombian legislation,¹ and International Law.

Mr. Londoño was murdered in Cali on 21 June 2014 at 22:07. He was a criminal lawyer who, along with many others, worked in the Immediate Reaction Unit of the Prosecutor's Office (URI), and provided representation for detainees.

I am writing to express our grave concerns regarding this horrific incident. The work of lawyers like Mr. **Londoño** is vital to ensuring that the rule of law is upheld in Colombia and that citizens' rights are protected, and is vital to any peace process. Their important work to uphold the right to access justice should be publicly recognised. In light of this event, it is clear that the current situation is wholly unacceptable and must be rectified to ensure the safety of lawyers. It is vital that lawyers are able to conduct their work without fear of violence in a democratic society.

In this context, I respectfully direct your attention to Articles 16(a) and (c), 17, and 18 of the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990)² These establish that lawyers must be adequately

¹ Law 1426 of December 29 2010.

² 2 Which state that:

16. Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; ... and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.



safeguarded by authorities where their security is at risk as a result of discharging their functions. We are gravely concerned that the murder of Mr. Londoño demonstrates that the current level of protection in place for lawyers is wholly inadequate. We further draw your attention to the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials adopted by the UN General Assembly on 17 September 1979, specifically Articles 1, 2 and 8³ and to Article 12 of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 8 March 1999.⁴

According to figures from the Attorney General's Office, over 400 lawyers have been killed in Colombia since 2002. We consider that it is vital for the rule of law and access to justice in Colombia that the current climate of threats against these human rights lawyers is urgently addressed.

We therefore ask that the local, departmental, and national authorities take action to ensure the security of all lawyers, so that they can conduct their work without fear of violence, discrimination, harassment or threats of any kind. Specifically, we ask that the Colombian state:

- fully and impartially investigates this terrible incident and ensures that appropriate action is taken to bring the perpetrators to justice;
- ensures that appropriate protection measures are adopted and implemented to properly safeguard lawyers.

17. Where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities.

18. Lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions.

³ Article 1 :Law enforcement officials shall at all times fulfil the duty imposed upon them by law, by serving the community and by protecting all persons against illegal acts, consistent with the high degree of responsibility required by their profession.

Article 2: In the performance of their duty, law enforcement officials shall respect and protect human dignity and maintain and up-hold the human rights of all persons.

Article 8: Law enforcement officials shall respect the law and the present Code. They shall also, to the best of their capability, prevent and rigorously oppose any violations of them.

⁴ 3 Which states that:

1. Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to participate in peaceful activities against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

2. The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration.

3. In this connection, everyone is entitled, individually and in association with others, to be protected effectively under national law in reacting against or opposing, through peaceful means, activities and acts, including those by omission, attributable to States that result in violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as acts of violence perpetrated by groups or individuals that affect the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

We will continue to monitor the situation regarding the safety of all lawyers in Colombia. We also ask that we be kept updated in respect of the extent to which progress has been made in investigating the murder of Mr. Londoño and in bringing those responsible to justice, and in implementing appropriate protective measures in order to prevent any further attacks on lawyers.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Sara Chandler
Chair, Colombian Caravana UK Lawyers Group

cc:

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| -Andres Villamizar: Director of National Unity
Protection of Minister of Interior | - Sarah Smith, Law Society of England
and Wales |
| -La Fiscalía General de la Nación
Comite Ejecutivo de la Abogacia
Colombiana | - Gabriela Carina Knaul de Albuquerque
e Silva, Relatora Especial de las
Naciones Unidas sobre la
independencia de magistrados y
abogados |
| - Vice-Presidente Angelino Garzón | - Margaret Sekaggya, Relator Especial
de las Naciones Unidas: sobre la
situación de los defensores de
derechos humanos |
| -Daniel Ricardo Silva, Human Rights and
Environmental Attache, Embassy of
Colombia, London | |
| Abogados por Abogados | |
| - Abogados Sin Fronteras Canadá | |
| - Asociación Colombiana de Abogados
de Derechos Humanos (ACADEHUM) | |