

JOINT STATEMENT

Inadmissible Accusations against Human Rights Defender

May 2015

The U.S. and European organisations and coordination groups signing this statement wish to express our dismay and concern regarding the serious accusations and attacks via social networks against renowned **human rights defender José Humberto Torres**, by Mr. Dieb Maloof, related to the current ongoing criminal investigation into the murder of Mr. Nelson Mejía. In recent days and via different media sites, Mr. Dieb Maloof has accused José Humberto Torres of being the “national leader of the cartel of false witnesses”. In addition to this, via the Twitter account @todosconmalloof, José Humberto Torres has been the subject of all manner of groundless accusations and aggression.

José Humberto Torres has worked for many years in the defence of human rights carrying out valuable work as a trial lawyer as part of the struggle to overcome impunity in Colombia.

We believe that events like this **raise concerns about the growing climate of hostility against human rights defenders and peace activists** that we have seen in recent months, expressed in multiple threats, smears and even legal actions, aimed at denying land claimants their rights.

In light of this, **we urge Mr. Juan Fernando Cristo, as Minister of the Interior** and head of the National Guarantees Process to speak out against these serious accusations against José Humberto Torres, who is a spokesperson for the Colombian Coordination Groups participating in the Guarantees Process. We also urge Mr Fernando Cristo to make progress on developing a policy to give effective guarantees of prevention and protection for defenders as a necessary precondition for progress towards peace.

We also call upon **the Public Prosecutor's Office** to promptly make progress in the corresponding investigation to determine the motives and perpetrators directly and indirectly responsible for these accusations against Mr. Torres.

We call upon the **Director of the National Protection Unit** to consider the increased risk from these accusations and intensify protection measures for José Humberto Torres.

We urge the international community to pay special attention to this situation and demand that the Colombian State progress in investigations and sanctions for those responsible for threats and attacks against human rights defenders.

SIGNED:

- Oficina Internacional de Derechos Humanos-Acción Colombia – ODHACO (Plataforma de organizaciones europeas)
- Organización Mundial contra la Tortura (OMCT) (Organización Internacional)
- kolko - Menschenrechte für Kolumbien (Alemania)
- Comité pour le respect des droits humains "Daniel Gillard" (Belgica)
- Abogados Sin Fronteras Canadá
- Lawyers Rights Watch Canada
- Taula Catalana por la Paz y los Derechos Humanos en Colombia (Estado Español)

- Justicia por Colombia (Estado Español)
- SOLdePaz.Pachakuti (Estado Español)
- Mundubat (Estado Español)
- Cooperaccio (Estado Español)
- Intrermon Oxfam (Estado Español)
- Colombia Human Rights Committee, (Estados Unidos)
- Washington Office on Latin America -WOLA(Estados Unidos)
- Latin America Working Group (LAWG) (Estados Unidos)
- ACAT - Action des chrétiens pour l'abolition de la torture (Francia)
- Fokus-Forum for Women and Development (Noruega)
- Caravana Internacional de Juristas - Grupo de Abogados de los Países Bajos
- Lawyers for Lawyers (Países Bajos)
- ABColombia (Plataforma de organizaciones de Reino Unido)
- Caravana Internacional de Juristas - Grupo de Abogados del Reino Unido
- ASK! – Grupo de Trabajo Suizo por Colombia (Suiza)

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