

Fundación
ABOGACÍA ESPAÑOLA



Colombian Caravana UK Lawyers Group
promoting access to justice
and protecting human rights



deighton pierce glynn
a merger of Deighton Guedalla and Pierce Glynn solicitors

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

8 Union Street
London, SE1 1SZ
United Kingdom

Señor PAULO ABRÃO
Executive Secretary
Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
Washington, D.C.

7 August 2017

Dear Mr Paulo Abrão,

Re: Letter of support for the application for Precautionary Measures by Equipo Jurídico Pueblos

We write on behalf of the **Colombian Caravana UK Lawyers Group, Lawyers Rights Watch Canada, la Fundación de la Abogacía Española, Lawyers for Lawyers, Colombia Caravana de Juristas the Netherlands and Caravana Irish Lawyers' Group and Deighton Pierce Glynn**; international organisations and a law firm that are part of the International Caravana of Jurists (International Caravana). During biennial visits to Colombia since 2008, including during our most recent visit in August 2016, we have called upon the Colombian government to protect the ability of lawyers and human rights defenders to represent their clients, and to refrain from any interferences in their work, in order to comply with both Colombian and international law.

We have been working closely with members of Equipo Jurídico Pueblos (EJP) and others in Colombia in order to ensure we are well informed of the situation affecting human rights lawyers in the country.

We have been made aware of the application to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) for Group Precautionary Measures by EJP, submitted on 12 July 2017, enclosed with this letter.

We strongly support this application on behalf of the 14 proposed beneficiaries of Precautionary Measures, who are all members of EJP. We note that the application by EJP specifically asks the IACHR to:

1. Grant Precautionary Measures for the members of EJP.
2. Order the Colombian State to take effective individual and collective measures to protect the life and physical integrity of members of EJP, in accordance with their wishes. EJP have informed us that the protection measures assigned by the Colombian state are not only insufficient to protect their lives, but are also likely to put them in even greater danger and do not enable them to discharge their functions safely as lawyers.



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3. Order the Colombian State to initiate and complete full and impartial criminal and disciplinary investigations into the threats, injuries and acts of torture that have been denounced by EJP, with the objective of bringing to justice those responsible for any criminal acts committed against them
4. Order the Colombian State to implement expeditiously material protective measures with a differential perspective for those affected by the violent and threatening action against members of EJP.

The International Caravana has had serious concerns regarding the inadequate protection afforded to lawyers from EJP for a long period of time. The risks associated with and the inadequacy of the protection measures granted to some EJP members were detailed in our most recent report of November 2016;¹ our letter of 4 May 2016 to Mr Juan David Bello of the National Protection Unit of Colombia (attached); and our letter of 6 June 2017 addressed to President Santos and copied to the Head of the National Protection Unit (UNP) and other Colombian authorities.² The Caravana has written a number of letters to the Colombian Authorities since 2013 regarding this serious situation.³

This lack of sufficient protective measures subsists despite the fact that the Technical Secretary of the Coordination Committee for Risk Assessment and Recommendation of Measures (CERREM) previously completed a risk analysis in respect of Mr. Rommel Jontahn Castellanos Durán, Ms Gloria Silva Tovar and Mr Leonardo Jaimes Marín and determined their risk level as being extraordinary, the highest-risk category as classified by the Colombian authorities.

The latest event that we have been made aware of is the case of Mr. Duran Castellanos and María Fernanda Montiel Murillo (journalist with Colombia Informa and member of EJP and a proposed beneficiary of protective measures) who were the subject of arrest, detention, and ill-treatment possibly amounting to torture on 1 July 2017.

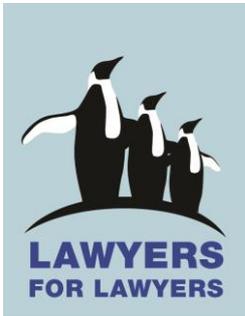
We also note there is a high rate of impunity for killings and threats to human rights lawyers in general and there appears to be little investigation of the serious threats and harassment towards them. In the 2016 Caravana report, we note that there had been evidence of the Colombian State conducting investigations against human rights defenders and social leaders more quickly than allegations against the perpetrators of crimes against them.⁴

¹ Available at: <http://www.colombiancaravana.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/CARAVANA-OF-JURISTS-2016-DELEGATION-REPORT-ENG.pdf>

² Available at: <http://www.colombiancaravana.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/220517-EJP-letter.pdf>

³ <http://www.colombiancaravana.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Pitalito-Rommel-ENGLISH-20122013.pdf>;
<http://www.colombiancaravana.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/LETTER-12.08.2014-Arrest-Release.pdf>;
<http://www.colombiancaravana.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Rommel-Duran-Mayo-2015-ESP.pdf>
<http://www.colombiancaravana.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Letter-UNP-Rommel-Duran-eng.pdf>

⁴ Supra note 1, page 11.



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We would like to remind you that the signing organisations are not acting directly on behalf of the victims in these cases. We write to add our voices to the international call for swift action to be taken to protect the lives and livelihoods of human rights defenders and to prevent and punish attacks against them.

Yours sincerely,

Charlotte Gill
Colombian Caravana UK Lawyers Group

Heather Neun
Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

Carles MacCragh
Fundación de la Abogacía española

Adrie van de Streek
Lawyers for Lawyers

Wout Albers
Colombia Caravana de Juristas the Netherlands (Colombia Caravana de Juristas de los Países Bajos)

Mary Henderson and Sean O'Reilly
Colombian Caravana Irish Lawyers' Group

Sue Willnam
Deighton Pierce Glynn (from UK)

CC: Equipo Jurídico Pueblos