

Excmo. D. Nicolás Maduro Moros
Presidente de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela
Palacio de Miraflores, Av. Nte. 10
Caracas
República Bolivariana de Venezuela

Brussels, 5 November 2015

Re: Concerns regarding attacks on lawyers in Venezuela

Your Excellency,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), which, through the national Bars and Law Societies of the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area, represents more than 1 million European lawyers. In addition to membership from EU bars, it also has observer representatives from a further thirteen European countries' bars. The CCBE places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law, and is particularly concerned with the situation of human rights defenders around the world.

We are very concerned about the lack of independence of the judicial branch in Venezuela, and for the situation of criminal justice in general. We know that there are many international reports that have already alerted Venezuelan authorities to this situation, and we urge you to act promptly in order to guarantee that in Venezuela democracy and fundamental rights and personal freedoms are respected.

We are particularly concerned by the situation of human rights defenders in Venezuela. The CCBE writes to express its serious concerns over the situation of defence lawyers, such as the collective Foro Penal Venezolano.

The CCBE is following with great anxiety the situation in which some lawyers find themselves just for being lawyers. We would urge you to stop the attacks addressed to lawyers by the Government and using means such as public TV to launch such attacks. We condemn the threats that have been addressed many times and through different channels against lawyers.

In this context, the CCBE again wishes to draw to your attention the Principle of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (attached), in particular Principles 16 and 17 on Guarantees for the functioning of lawyers, and Principle 23 on Freedom of expression and association.

In view of the above, the CCBE respectfully urges you to address urgently the situation of the criminal justice system in Venezuela, and to take adequate measures to ensure the independence of the judicial branch as well as respect for and protection of lawyers.

I look forward to hearing from you urgently.

Yours sincerely,



Maria Ślązak