

**Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente Don Juan  
Manuel Santos  
Presidente de la República,  
Palacio de Nariño,  
Carrera 8 No.7-26,  
Bogotá, Colombia  
Fax: +57 1 596 0631**

**Re: Concerns regarding the case of lawyer William Cristancho Duarte**

Dear President Santos,

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 around one million European lawyers. In addition to membership from EU bars, it also has observer representatives from a further eleven European countries' bars.

The CCBE, through its Human Rights Committee, places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law. The CCBE is particularly concerned by the situation of human rights defenders around the world.

We are writing to express our serious concerns over the situation facing human rights lawyer William Cristancho Duarte working on the case of the extrajudicial executions of Julio César Cardozo Quiñónez and José del Carmen Barbosa Patiño, two local peasant farmers who were killed during a military operation of the Battalion of Engineers Francisco José de Caldas (Batallón de Ingenieros Francisco José de Caldas) in the Piedecuesta Municipality on 19 October 2007.

According to the information received, on 26<sup>th</sup> October William Cristancho was followed on his way to a hearing with local judicial officials to discuss the possible detention of members of the Battalion of Engineers Francisco José de Caldas for their participation in the killings. It would seem that he was threatened soon after leaving the meeting on the phone and then by a stranger who approached him due to his involvement in the case. Especially worrisome is that it appears that a witness to the killings was also apparently threatened.

In this context, the CCBE wishes to draw to your attention the following Articles of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990):

Article 16 states that:

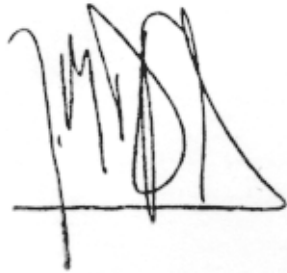
*Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economics or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.*

Furthermore, the provisions of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted on December 9, 1998 by the United Nations General Assembly, in particular its article 1 states that:

*“Everyone has the right, individually or in association with others, to promote the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels”,*

In view of the above, the CCBE respectfully urges you to investigate the above mentioned facts and to take immediate and effective action to guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of William Crispancho Duarte and the witness as well as all human rights defenders, in order to preserve the independence and integrity of the administration of justice in Colombia.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JMD', written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and somewhat abstract.

JOSÉ-MARÍA DAVÓ-FERNÁNDEZ  
President