

**Fiscalia General de la Nacion  
Mr Eduardo Montealegre Lynett – Attorney General  
Diagonal 22 B 52-01 (Ciudad Salitre)  
Bogotá D.C. Colombia**

Brussels, 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2013

**Re: Concerns regarding increasing attacks towards human rights lawyers in the mid-west  
Colombia**

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 has also 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 in the world.

The CCBE writes to express its serious concern over the recent increase of attacks on human rights defenders in mid-west Colombia.

The CCBE has been informed that, during the last months, human rights lawyers have been the object of several threats and attacks, most notably in the regions of Valle del Cauca and Córdoba.

According to the information we have received, it seems that six lawyers have been murdered in this area during the last months. Especially worrisome is that there is hardly any information regarding the exact circumstances of the reported murders and that these events are apparently very poorly investigated by the competent national and local authorities.

The threatening situation is not over, because we are told that in October 2012 death threats were received by German Romero and Jorge Molano, two prominent lawyers engaged in the defence of victims of grave human rights violations attributed to senior level army officers and paramilitaries

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, Article 17 states that:

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

In view of the above, the CCBE respectfully urges you take immediate and effective steps to ensure that these murders are rapidly and thoroughly investigated in order to identify and bring to justice those who are responsible for them. The CCBE also urges you to take all necessary measures to guarantee that lawyers in Colombia are able to perform their professional duties without fear of reprisal, hindrance, intimidation and harassment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Tsouroulis', written in a cursive style.

Evangelos TSOUROULIS  
CCBE President