

**Sr. Juan Orlando Hernández
Presidente de la República
Casa Presidencial
Boulevard Juan Pablo Segundo
Palacio José Cecilio Del Valle
Tegucigalpa, Honduras**

Brussels, 16 January 2014

Re: Concerns regarding the killings of lawyers in Honduras over the past three years

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 twelve European countries' bars represents the bars and law societies of 32 member countries and 12 further associate and observer countries, and through them more than 1 million European lawyers.

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 deplores the increasing number of lawyers' killings in Honduras as well as the impunity of the perpetrators of these horrible and unacceptable crimes, which are never or very rarely prosecuted and punished.

The CCBE previously wrote to your country's authorities in 2012 in order to express its deep concern over the killing of almost 70 lawyers in Honduras over the past three years (see our letter of 8 December 2012 attached as an annex). Nevertheless, it seems that the threatening situation is not over yet. According to the information that we received, lawyers in Honduras continue to face attacks in connection with the legitimate exercise of their professional activity. Most recently, in November 2013, Mr Víctor Carías, a criminal lawyer, was killed in a shooting in Tegucigalpa.

The CCBE is deeply alarmed by this situation and would like to draw your Excellency's attention to the following articles of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990):

Article 16 states that:

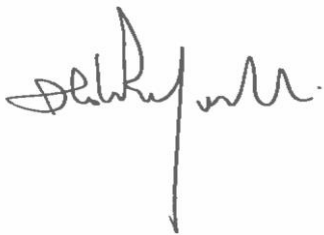
Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or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

Moreover 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.

The CCBE firmly believes that the country's authorities must step up their efforts to protect lawyers and human rights defenders. Therefore we respectfully urge your Excellency to take immediate and effective steps to guarantee that the recent lawyers' killings are properly and impartially investigated and that the persons responsible are promptly identified and prosecuted. The CCBE also asks you to take all the necessary measures to ensure that lawyers in Honduras are able to carry out their professional activities, in all circumstances, without fearing for their safety and lives; the latter being extremely important for the successful functioning of the justice system and the proper application of the rule of law.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aldo Bulgarelli', with a long vertical line extending downwards from the end of the signature.

Aldo BULGARELLI
CCBE President

Sr. Porfirio Lobo Sosa
Presidente de la República
Casa Presidencial
Boulevard Juan Pablo Segundo
Palacio José Cecilio Del Valle
Tegucigalpa, Honduras

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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 concerns over the killings of 74 lawyers in the past three years in Honduras. Especially worrisome is that, according to the Honduras College of Lawyers, these mass killings of lawyers have been executed with total impunity by their persecutors, illustrating a grave failure in the rule of law in Honduras.

The CCBE takes note that the investigation of these murders is currently being carried out by the authorities of the Honduras Bar Association (CAH) and the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights. The CCBE applauds the initiative from the president of CAH, Olvin Mejia, who agreed with the Minister of Justice and Human Rights, Ana Pineda, to join forces to carry out investigations in this regard.

It is with great expectations that the CCBE will follow the anticipated agreement between Ms Pineda and Mr Mejia, which hopefully will be signed shortly, to strengthen the role of the Human Rights Commissioner of Legal Professionals that will be appointed by the Bar Association.

The CCBE respectfully urges you to encourage and support this investigation, and to guarantee that lawyers in Honduras are able to conduct their professional duties in future without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, in order to preserve the independence and integrity of the administration of justice.

Yours faithfully,



Marcella PRUNBAUER-GLASER

President