



BAR HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMITTEE OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

London, 8th April 2013

STATEMENT

The BHRC expresses concern at the murder of another lawyer in Colombia

The BHRC voices serious concern at the murder of the sixth lawyer this year in Colombia, on this occasion in the western province of Valle de Cauca.

On 21st March 2013, Diego Luis Garcia Gonzales was shot dead in his car whilst driving from Cali International Airport. He was a well respected and prominent criminal defence practitioner, appearing in the Valle de Cauca courts as well as in Bogota and Medellin. The increasingly hostile environment for lawyers in the area combined with the callous circumstances surrounding Diego Luis Garcia Gonzales' shooting have led to denunciations from bar associations in Colombian and beyond.

On March 11 2013, the President of the General Council of Spanish Lawyers, Carlos Carnicer, sent a letter to the President of the Republic of Colombia expressing concern and condemning the killings of lawyers in Colombia. At that time, five lawyers had already been killed since the start of the year. Carlos Camicer's letter also called on the national government, and in particular the Ministry of Justice, to provide proper protection for lawyers and to safeguard the administration of justice. The BHRC supports that call. According to local civil society groups, approximately 700 lawyers in Colombian have been murdered during the last 10 years.

The BHRC notes that international law provides guarantees for the safety of lawyers, and requires national governments to take all reasonable measures to protect those whose

profession is essential to the rule of law; *Article 17 of the Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers*¹.

The rule of law requires that those who instigate and perpetrate such crimes be brought to justice, and that there are effective measures in place to protect lawyers. The BHRC calls on the Colombian authorities rigorously to investigate this murder and those of other lawyers in the same region and to make every reasonable effort to ensure effective prosecutions are brought against both the material and intellectual authors of these crimes.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales (“BHRC”) is the international human rights arm of the Bar of England and Wales. It is an independent body concerned with protecting the rights of advocates, judges and human rights defenders around the world. The Committee is concerned with defending the rule of law and internationally recognised legal standards relating to human rights and the right to a fair trial. The remit of BHRC extends to all countries of the world, apart from its own jurisdiction of England & Wales. This reflects the Committee's need to maintain its role as an independent but legally qualified observer, critic and advisor, with internationally accepted rule of law principles at the heart of its agenda.
2. On 19th February 2013, the BHRC expressed concern at the news of the murders of two lawyers Eduardo Martínez (59) y Daniel Calderón (26) in Cali, Colombia. See [\[English\]](#) [\[Spanish\]](#)

END

BHRC website

<http://www.barhumanrights.org.uk/>

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¹ Adopted by the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Havana, Cuba, 27 August to 7 September 1990.