



Ambassador Mauricio Rodriguez  
Embassy of Colombia to the United Kingdom  
3 Hans Crescent  
London SW1X 0LN

9 February 2012

Dear Ambassador,

I am writing on behalf of the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers, to express our concern about the ongoing abuses against members of MOVICE, the National Movement for Victims of State Crimes, one of Colombia's largest and most persecuted human rights organisations. We recently learned that from August 2010 to July 2011 there was a 44% increase in human rights violations against MOVICE members. In response to this increased threat our Executive Committee agreed to adopt a campaign to raise awareness about these abuses within our membership and through our affiliations to European and international legal organisations.

In particular, we are concerned about the case of Mr. David Rabelo Crespo, a leading member of MOVICE and spokesperson for regional human rights group CREDHOS. Mr. Rabelo has been imprisoned since 14<sup>th</sup> September 2010 and is currently being held in La Modelo Prison, Bucaramanga, on accusations of "conspiracy to commit a crime" and "aggravated homicide".

The case against Mr. Rabelo is based on the testimony of former paramilitary, Mario Jaimes Mejía, alias "El Panadero" - who in exchange had his prison sentence reduced from over 40 years, to a maximum of eight. It is also important to note that Mr. Rabelo's human rights work helped lead to a conviction against Mr. Mejía, rendering his testimony far from impartial. Given the dubious nature of evidence against him, and his key role as a human rights defender, it appears that Mr. Rabelo has been imprisoned as a result of his valuable work.

On 29<sup>th</sup> December 2011, state prosecutor No. 22, William Pacheco, attempted to order Mr. Rabelo's transfer to La Picota Prison in Bogota. MOVICE has expressed concern that this would negatively affect Mr. Rabelo's health and given the continued threats against Mr. Rabelo and his family both before and during his detention, there are also grave concerns for his safety during the transfer. We therefore ask for guarantees that Mr. Rabelo will not be transferred, in order to safeguard his life.

Other members of CREDHOS, Mr. Rabelo's regional organisation and an affiliate of MOVICE, have also been targeted as a result of their work. On 13<sup>th</sup> January 2012 in Barrancabermeja Mr. Abelardo Sánchez Serrano, an executive member of Credhos, was threatened by armed men on a motorbike who warned him "We should stop denigrating state forces, we already have one son of a bitch guerrilla from Credhos in prison and if it's necessary, we will do it to the others to silence them.". The Inter-American Commission awarded Credhos with "cautionary measures", obligating the Colombian state to provide them with protection; however this is yet to be fulfilled.

We are also concerned by numerous recent threats and intimidations against members of MOVICE's affiliate organisations in the Magdalena Medio, all of which helped to organise a high profile event on 18<sup>th</sup> January calling for justice for the Massacre of La Rochela. On 21<sup>st</sup> January a delegation of campesino farmers returning from the event, including Mario Echeverría, leader of the ACVC peasant organisation, faced intimidations from two armed men who they identified as paramilitaries. On 23<sup>rd</sup> January, a man came to the house of María Del Socorro Abril Cediél, President of ASODESAMUBA, an organisation representing victims of forced displacement, and threatened to kill her and her daughter. On 24<sup>th</sup> January, Lilia Peña Silva, President of human rights organisation ASORVIMM, received a threatening text message warning her not to participate in this kind of event again. These threats make clear the hostile environment that continues to inhibit the defence of human rights in Colombia.

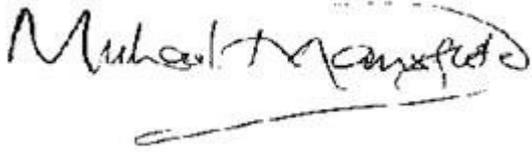
We also have grave concerns about the situation of MOVICE affiliate CPDH, the Permanent Committee for Human Rights. Their national and regional leaders are currently facing false accusations, judicial cases and false imprisonment, including the detention on 2<sup>nd</sup> October of Luís Alfredo, treasurer of the CPDH regional chapter in Algeciras. Mr. Alfredo continues to be held in La Modelo Prison, Bogota accused of "rebellion". In addition, on 26<sup>th</sup> January an unidentified man forcibly entered the CPDH office in Bogota, in order to verify the participants in a human rights meeting, who had reported facing abuses by the Colombian army. Since August 2010 the CPDH has requested protection measures from the Colombian state, however they are yet to receive a response.

The above mentioned cases are representative of many ongoing violations against MOVICE members as a result of their work, including intimidations, false accusations, imprisonment and assassinations. Due to these threats numerous individual members and affiliate organisations of MOVICE have requested urgent protection measures from the state, yet their requests have been denied or remain unanswered, belying claims that the Colombian government is committed to human rights.

We urge the Colombian authorities to put their rhetoric into action. There must be an end to the false cases against Mr. Rabelo and other human rights defenders as a result of their work, those imprisoned must be released and the authorities must ensure these cases are conducted fairly. To show a real commitment to ending the violations crimes against MOVICE members must be investigated and the state must provide the requested protection measures for those at risk.

I look forward to hearing from you with progress in this matter,

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Mansfield". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Michael Mansfield QC

President

Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers

cc: Rt Hon William Hague MP, First Secretary of State, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, UK

HMA John Dew, British Ambassador in Colombia

Amnesty International

Justice for Colombia

MOVICE