

Open Letter to Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos

Dear President Santos

We, the undersigned, are writing to add our support to the international campaign for the release from prison of Colombian academic Dr Miguel Angel Beltran. He has now been detained for more than 22 months in La Picota Prison, Bogota, without being convicted of any crime.

Dr Beltran is accused of 'rebellion' and has been falsely branded a terrorist by the Colombian state.

We know that Dr Beltran's academic work was critical of the Colombian regime, and it appears that like so many in Colombia, he has been jailed in order to silence him and discourage others like him from speaking out.

We believe that critical thought and freedom of expression are crucial to any truly democratic society, however Dr Beltran's ongoing detention demonstrates that in Colombia these are treated as criminal.

The large number of political prisoners that continue to be held in Colombia's jails - be they academics, trade unionists, community leaders or other civil society activists - belies claims that your government is committed to improving human rights.

We therefore urge you to release Dr Beltran immediately and put an end to this shameful situation without delay.

Yours sincerely

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