

Open Letter to President Juan Manuel Santos

Dear Mr. President,

We, the undersigned, are writing to demand the immediate release from prison of Colombian academic Dr Miguel Angel Beltran. Dr Beltran has been imprisoned since May 2009 without being convicted of any crime whatsoever. He has been accused of 'rebellion' and branded a terrorist by the Colombian State, yet no evidence has been provided to back up the allegations.

We are deeply concerned that Dr Beltran, like so many others in Colombia, has been jailed for his political beliefs rather than for any crime; that he is being deprived of his liberty in order to silence him and discourage others like him from speaking out. We believe that academic freedom and freedom of expression are fundamental rights, and a pillar of democratic society, but Dr Beltran's ongoing detention shows that Colombia currently respects neither.

We therefore urge you to order his immediate release. The large number of political prisoners in Colombia's jails – be they academics, trade unionists, community leaders or other civil society activists – belies claims that human rights are being respected by the Colombian State.

We urge you to put an end to this shameful situation without delay.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Richard Roberts, Nobel Prize Winner
Professor Sir John Ball, Sedleian Professor of Natural Philosophy, University of Oxford
Professor Dame Janet Nelson, Emeritus Professor of History, King's College London
Alan Whitaker, President, University and College Union
Terry Hoad, Vice President, University and College Union
Sally Hunt, General Secretary, University and College Union

Professor Jane Aaron, University of Glamorgan
Professor David Allen, Sheffield Hallam University
Professor Sarah Ashwin, London School of Economics
Professor Ruth Aylett, Heriot-Watt University
Professor Sebastian Balfour, London School of Economics
Professor Malcolm Barber, University of Reading
Professor Ann-Marie Bathmaker, West of England University
Professor Gargi Bhattacharyya, Aston University
Professor Andreas Bieler, University of Nottingham
Professor Bob Brecher, University of Brighton
Professor David Broomhead, University of Manchester
Professor David Bunce, Brunel University
Professor Alister Burr, University of York
Professor Paul Busch, University of York
Professor Ray Bush, University of Leeds
Professor Pat Caplan, University of London
Professor Anthony Carbery, University of Edinburgh
Professor David Chadwick, University of Kent
Professor Thomas Collett, University of Sussex
Professor Helen Colley, Manchester Metropolitan University
Professor Mike Coombes, Newcastle University
Professor Christine Cooper, University of Strathclyde
Professor Greville Corbett, University of Surrey
Professor Owen Davies, University of Hertfordshire
Professor Mary Davis, London Metropolitan University
Professor Peter Delves, University College London
Professor Simon Duncan, University of Bradford
Professor Richard Dyer, King's College London
Professor Chris Eilbeck, Heriot-Watt University
Professor Lawrie Elliott, Edinburgh Napier University
Professor Tony Evans, University of Southampton
Professor Stephan Feuchtwang, London School of Economics
Professor Jeremy Field, University of Sussex
Professor Karl Figlio, University of Essex
Professor Rajmil Fischman, Keele University
Professor Roderick Flower, University of London
Professor Steven French, University of Leeds
Professor David George, Swansea University

Professor Andrew Gilbert, University of Exeter
Professor Helen Gilbert, University of London
Professor John Gledhill, University of Manchester
Professor Jonathan Glover, King's College London
Professor Fernand Gobet, Brunel University
Professor Laurence Goldstein, University of Kent
Professor Jonathan Gosling, University of Exeter
Professor Helen Graham, University of London
Professor Vic Grout, Glyndwr University
Professor Martyn Hammersley, The Open University
Professor Richard Hanley, University of Essex
Professor Malcolm Heggie, University of Sussex
Professor Piers Hellawell, Queen's University Belfast
Professor Stephen Hodgkinson, University of Nottingham
Professor Martin Hooper, University of Edinburgh
Professor Jim Howie, Heriot-Watt University
Professor Rhys Jenkins, University of East Anglia
Professor Heather Joshi, University of London
Professor Anahid Kassabian, University of Liverpool
Professor Christopher Knusel, University of Exeter
Professor Ailsa Land, London School of Economics
Professor Vicky Lebeau, University of Sussex
Professor Robert Lee, University of Liverpool
Professor David Lewis, Middlesex University
Professor Wanda Lewis, University of Warwick
Professor Niall Logan, Glasgow Caledonian University
Professor Stuart Macdonald, University of Sheffield
Professor Christine MacLeod, University of Bristol
Professor Luke Martell, University of Sussex
Professor Doreen Massey, The Open University
Professor Eric Matthews, University of Aberdeen
Professor Tim May, University of Salford
Professor Daphne McCulloch, Glasgow Caledonian University
Professor Mary McMurrin, University of Nottingham
Professor Elizabeth Meehan, Queen's University Belfast
Professor Sara Mills, Sheffield Hallam University
Professor David Mond, University of Warwick
Professor James Montgomery, University of Cambridge

Professor Adrian Moore, University of Oxford
Professor Gareth Morgan, Sheffield Hallam University
Professor Maurice Mulvenna, University of Ulster
Professor Laura Mulvey, University of London
Professor Isobel Murray, University of Aberdeen
Professor Alistair Mutch, Nottingham Trent University
Professor Stephen Nugent, University of London
Professor Eric Olson, University of Sheffield
Professor John O'Neill, University of Manchester
Professor Bill Overton, Loughborough University
Professor Andy Penaluna, Swansea Metropolitan University
Professor Hilary Povey, Sheffield Hallam University
Professor Paul Preston, London School of Economics
Professor Gesine Reinert, University of Oxford
Professor Jonathan Rosenhead, London School of Economics
Professor Raphael Salkie, University of Brighton
Professor Andrew Sayer, Lancaster University
Professor Michael Shaw, University of Reading
Professor David Simon, University of London
Professor Martin Sinha, University of Southampton
Professor Nick Smimoff, University of Exeter
Professor Alan Sokal, University College London
Professor Kirsten Stalker, University of Strathclyde
Professor Trevor Stuart, Imperial College London
Professor Peter Taylor-Gooby, University of Kent
Professor Richard Thomas, Imperial College London
Professor Jon Tonge, University of Liverpool
Professor Colin Torrance, University of Glamorgan
Professor Joy Townsend, University of London
Professor Geoffrey Turner, University of Sheffield
Professor Carole-Anne Upton, University of Ulster
Professor Peter Wade, University of Manchester
Professor Philip Wadler, University of Edinburgh
Professor Judy Wajcman, London School of Economics
Professor Paul Ward, University of Huddersfield
Professor David Wiles, University of London
Professor Andrew Williams, University of Warwick
Professor Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, University of York

And more than a thousand other British academics

(Full list available at www.ucu.org.uk)