



# ELDH European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights

WITH LAWYERS  
IN 21 COUNTRIES

EJDM Europäische Vereinigung von Juristinnen & Juristen für Demokratie und Menschenrechte in der Welt  
EJDH Asociación Europea de los Juristas por la Democracia y los Derechos Humanos en el Mundo  
EJDH Association Européenne des Juristes pour la Démocratie & les Droits de l'Homme  
EGDU Associazione Europea delle Giuriste e dei Giuristi per la Democrazia e i Diritti dell'Uomo nel Mondo

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**Delegation of the European Union to Colombia**  
**Human Rights Focal Point and Liaison Officer for Human Rights Defenders**  
**Ms. Anne-Sophie Houée**  
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Düsseldorf, 04 December 2020

Dear Ms. Houée,

As Secretary General of the European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights (ELDH), I am writing to express our serious concern over threats against members of the National Movement for Victims of State Crimes (*Movimiento Nacional de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado*, MOVICE).

On 10 November, MOVICE said threats had been made against national representatives, Luz Marina Hache Contreras and Luis Alfonso Castillo, as well as Bogota representative Carmen Mayusa, and that they have been 'the object of constant threats through pamphlets signed by the paramilitary group Black Eagles Capital Bloc.' This follows the attack on 19 October against MOVICE regional representative Hernando Benítez in Sucre, while the organisation warns that its members have also been targeted in Cauca, Tolima and Putumayo. MOVICE says that threats have increased since the initiation of the National Strike in November 2019.

ELDH has built close relationships with social and human rights organisations in Colombia, including MOVICE.

As MOVICE represents victims of crimes committed by agents of the Colombian state, it is imperative that the government ensures transparent and independent investigations into threats and violence against MOVICE's representatives. Given President Duque's stated commitment to the protection of human rights, we hope that this will be the case.

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As we approach the fourth anniversary of Colombia's historic peace agreement – which provided such grounds for optimism – it is extremely alarming that Colombian human rights defenders still face threats, intimidation and worse. The shocking number of murders of community leaders, human rights defenders and trade unionists in the four years since the peace agreement was signed demonstrates the need to respond urgently to any threat. According to the NGO Somos Defensores, 95 people were killed in the first six months of this year alone.

We note that lawyers are among those being targeted. In late 2019, threats were sent to human rights lawyer Diego Martínez. Gustavo Gallardo and Nadia Triviño of the Links of Dignity Foundation (*Fundación Lazos de Dignidad*, FLD) have also received threats.

MOVICE has identified a series of areas which it says demonstrate the Colombian government's failure to provide an effective response to threats and violence against human rights defenders. These include a rise in abuses committed by state agents; the lack of a public policy by the National Commission of Security Guarantees towards dismantling armed groups; the incapacity of the National Protection Unit to process requests; and regular government pronouncements which 'aim to hide or trivialise the systematic genocide that social leaders are suffering.'

While we welcome the recent extension of the Law for Victims and Land Restitution until 2031, we ask that you make representations to the Colombian government over these important points raised by MOVICE.

Finally, ELDH emphasises its support for Colombian human rights defenders and their vital role in advancing national reconciliation and peace.

Yours sincerely



Thomas Schmidt  
Secretary General, ELDH

C.C.

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