



ELDH European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights

WITH LAWYERS
IN 22 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

Equality Privacy Social Rights
No Racism Peace No Torture No War
Self-Determination of Peoples Democracy
Human Rights Rights of Migrants

Bologna, Donostia, Düsseldorf, Vienna, 22 March 2024

ELDH celebrates the historic decision of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to hold Colombia responsible for violating the right to defend human rights.

The “Miembros de la Corporación Colectivo de Abogados “José Alvear Restrepo” Vs.Colombia” case judgment of 18th October 2023, is a historic opportunity to make reparations to the victims, who for more than 45 years have worked in the defense of human rights in Colombia.

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights has issued a historic judgment recognizing the responsibility of the Colombian State for having systematically persecuted, harassed, stigmatized and surveilled members of the "José Alvear Restrepo" Lawyers' Collective (Cajar) and their families.

The Court found the Colombian State responsible for violating the rights to life, to personal integrity, to privacy, to freedom of thought and expression, to informational self-determination, to know the truth, to honor, to judicial guarantees, to judicial protection, to freedom of association, movement and residence, to the protection of the family, the rights of children and the right to defend the human rights of the members of the lawyers' collective and their families.

The Court also recognized the particular affectation experienced by the women defenders, as well as the serious impacts suffered by those who had to leave the country as a result of threats, aggressions and harassment for their work representing victims.

The Court recognized that Colombia carried out intelligence activities against human rights defenders in an arbitrary and illegal manner, who were also victims of acts of violence and stigmatization by State agents and third parties.

According to the ruling, the State created a context of risk for the life and personal integrity of the victims through surveillance with intelligence work, as well as a field of impunity due to the lack of investigation and clarification of responsibilities for those events.

In a historically significant development, the Court highlighted the violation of the autonomous nature of the right to defend human rights, which incorporates the effective possibility of freely exercising, without limitations and without risks of any kind, different activities and tasks aimed at

ELDH European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights

Co-President: Urko Aiartza (lawyer), Donostia, Basque Country

Co-President: Barbara Spinelli (lawyer) Bologna

Co-Secretary General: Thomas Schmidt (lawyer), Düsseldorf | E-Mail: Thomas.schmidt@eldh.eu | Phone +49 (0)172 68 10 888

Co-Secretary General: Serife Ceren Uysal (lawyer), Vienna | E-Mail: serifecerenuysal@gmail.com | Phone +43 664 4853347

Postal address: ELDH | Thomas Schmidt | Platanenstrasse 13 | D – 40233 Düsseldorf (Germany)

Website: www.eldh.eu

promoting, monitoring, promoting, dissemination, teaching, defense, claim and protection of human rights and universally recognized fundamental freedoms.

The Court ordered 16 comprehensive reparation measures, including the holding of a public act of recognition of responsibility, a national information campaign regarding the violence and stigmatization of which human rights defenders have been victims, implementing a system for collecting data and figures on violence against defenders.

In a novel way, the tribunal ordered the adaptation of the Intelligence and Counterintelligence Law and the military manuals on the matter, in order to adjust them to international human rights standards, among others.

In addition, the Court ordered the State of Colombia to carry out the investigation of the acts of violence against the victims and the purification of the intelligence files to guarantee the victims' access to this information.

This ruling is a unique and unprecedented recognition of the work of people who defend human rights in Colombia and elsewhere and develops numerous topics that allow improving the protection of the right to defend human rights not only in Colombia but in the world.

From ELDH we show our joy and congratulate our Colombian colleagues for this historic judgment .