

17 November 2019

Mr Francisco Barbosa Delgado  
Consejero Presidencial para los Derechos Humanos y Asuntos Internacionales  
Casa de Nariño  
Carrera 8 No. 7-26  
Bogota  
Colombia



Dear Mr Barbosa,

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions is deeply concerned that Colombian human rights lawyer Diego Martinez has again been targeted with death threats. On behalf of 44 trade unions and their 800,000 members affiliated with the ICTU, I wish to condemn these threats in the strongest possible terms and to offer our support to Mr Martinez.

In 2014, the British-Irish organisation Justice for Colombia organised a visit by Mr Martinez to Ireland to attend the ICTU's biennial conference. Several Irish trade unionists have visited Colombia on JFC delegations, while the Fórsa public services union is a firm supporter of the JFC Peace Monitor project, which provides international support and observation of the implementation of the 2016 agreement.

On 10 November, Mr Martinez received a WhatsApp message which implied threats to his life and was signed under the name of the Black Eagles. Mr Martinez previously received threats in October 2018 and has requested enhanced security measures. We understand that these have not been granted.

Mr Martinez played a central role as a legal advisor to the FARC during the 2012-2016 peace negotiations. He currently represents the family of Dimar Torres, a FARC member murdered by members of the Army in April this year while working on reincorporation programmes to facilitate the transition of former guerrillas to civil society.

While Ireland has experienced many challenges on its journey towards peace, the scale of post-agreement violence in Colombia is truly shocking. We also note that the International Trade Union Confederation's Global Rights Index 2019 found murders of trade unionists in Colombia more than doubled from 2017 to 2018, accounting for almost two-thirds of worldwide cases (34 of 53 documented cases).

Ireland and Colombia share the painful history of conflict and both know the importance of building a stable and lasting peace to improving ordinary people's lives. For this to become a reality, legal processes must be able to operate autonomously, transparently and free from the threat of violence or external interference.

The ICTU recognises the Colombian government's repeated statements of commitment to the peace process and respectfully asks that it make every effort to ensure the security of all those working towards its full implementation. Additionally, we would be grateful if you could take all steps available to you to ensure the security of Mr Martinez is guaranteed.

Yours sincerely,

  
Patricia King  
General Secretary, Irish Congress of Trade Unions

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