

STAND **4** **HUMAN
RIGHTS
DEFENDERS**

DAVID RAVELO



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER STILL TO SERVE 13 YEARS IN PRISON

COLOMBIA

DESCRIPTION OF THE CASE

David Ravelo, a prominent Colombian human rights defender, has to this date served five of the more than 18 years of prison he was condemned to, for allegedly plotting the murder of a Colombian public official in 1991.

The process was plagued with irregularities:

- The accusation against David Ravelo was based on the testimony of incarcerated paramilitaries, one of which is currently being prosecuted for false testimony.
- The public prosecutor in the case was a former lieutenant in the Colombian National Police who had been suspended for his alleged involvement in the forced disappearance of a young man in 1991, which according to Colombian law should have prevented him from working as Prosecutor.

Context in Colombia: The Peace talks between the Colombian Government and the FARC guerilla have recently significantly reduced the level of violence related to the armed conflict, but according to statistics both from the UN and NGOs the number of killings of HRDs in 2015 was higher than the average over the last twenty years.

REACTIONS TO THE PROCEEDINGS AND SENTENCE

- In 2011, two UN Special Rapporteurs expressed their concerns regarding how “the criminalization of Ravelo Crespo would lead to an increase in miscarriage of justice cases against human rights defenders in Colombia”.
- Since he has been detained, the Embassies of Germany, Netherlands, France, Sweden and UK (amongst others) visited David Ravelo in prison. The last visit was in 2014.
- Members of the German, Irish and French parliaments also visited David Ravelo in prison. In 2010 a group of British parliamentarians claimed for his release.
- An application has been filed at the Inter-American Human Rights Commission (IACHR) and is currently in the information-gathering phase.

WHAT MORE COULD THE EU DO?

In the last five years, some MEPs have repeatedly expressed their concerns through public statements and written questions regarding the situation of human rights defenders in Colombia and they have asked the Commission to take action against the increasing number of attacks, threats, stigmatization and baseless prosecutions. A written question on David Ravelo’s case was submitted in 2012. In 2015, a MEP visited David in prison. This mobilisation must continue to avoid that the case of David Ravelo disappears from the attention of the international community.

You can act by:

- Making public pronouncements against the violation of national and international standards on the right to due process in the case of David Ravelo and highlighting the need for an in-depth reform of the legal system as a guarantee of non-repetition.
- Urging the Colombian authorities to investigate and prosecute those responsible for all the irregularities in the process against David Ravelo.
- Observing the upcoming trial hearings against “El Panadero” (“the Baker”), the paramilitary accused of false testimony, since these could impact Ravelo’s case in the long-term. Because of the involvement of paramilitaries, the case should be reviewed under the Special Peace Jurisdiction that will be created as part of the Peace Agreements.
- Visiting David Ravelo in Barrancabermeja’s prison, where he was transferred in August 2015.