



BAR HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMITTEE OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

Statement regarding the 'Mapiripán' case

London, 24 November 2011

On 25 October 2011, the Superior Tribunal of Bogotá magistrate Teresa Ruíz ordered an *investigation* into the issue of false victims. This was after declarations by Mariela Contreras during her testimony on 24 October 2011 that the disappearance of her two sons and the death of her husband occurred in circumstances unrelated to the Mapiripán massacre.

The José Alvear Restrepo Lawyers Collective (CCAJAR) had represented Senora Contreras. She implicated CCAJAR in her testimony.

The Fiscalía General de La Nación had taken her original statement and the Fiscalía had referred the case to CCAJAR for victim representation.

CCAJAR represented a further four groups.

There is no dispute that the massacre occurred. The exact number of victims was not determined by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. That obligation was placed upon the State.

Paramilitary member Gilberto Cuellar admitted participation in these criminal acts and claimed numbers of murdered were in excess of 20.

1. The Judge in Mapiripán, Leonardo Cortés, gave his eyewitness account as to there being several dozen victims.
2. Carlos Castaño Gil, in his "Victory report", stated there were 49 people eliminated.
3. CCAJAR has worked for victims of Colombia's violence for some 35 years. The lawyers have been subjected to death threats in the past - with threats emanating from a high level (DAS case).
4. Gustavo Gallón – the Director of the Colombian Commission of Jurists – records that at least 38 human rights defenders have been murdered or forcibly disappeared in the first half of 2011.
5. The BHRC expresses its fundamental objection to President Santos and other high level, influential members of government condemning CCAJAR. Condemnation pre-empts an objective enquiry and places the lives of the members of the Lawyers Collective in danger. The BHRC supports CCAJAR and issues a plea that the Colombian State pauses in its quick denouncements and allows fair due process to take place.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

The **Bar Human Rights Committee** is the international human rights arm of the Bar of England and Wales. It is an independent body concerned with defending the rule of law and internationally recognised legal standards relating to human rights and the right to a fair trial. For more information please contact BHRC in London, UK, on email: bhrc@compuserve.com.