**Juan Manuel Santos Calderón**

**President of the Republic of Colombia**

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**[Date]**

**Re: Free imprisoned academic and unionist Dr. Miguel Ángel Beltrán**

Dear President Santos,

The undersigned are writing to call for the release of Dr. Miguel Ángel Beltrán, a university lecturer and trade unionist. Dr. Beltrán was sent to prison in May 2009, charged with “rebellion” and “breaking the law for terrorist purposes”. Over one year after his imprisonment and in view of his new trial on 12 November 2010, there has been no evidence to support the allegations against him.

We are deeply concerned that professor Beltrán has been imprisoned for his independent academic writings and political beliefs, like so many other teachers in Colombia, without having committed any crime.

We firmly believe that academic freedom, freedom of thought and expression is not something to be granted by the state, but rather are fundamental human rights. We also believe that when the freedom to debate ideas and opinions is obstructed, the effective working of the democratic process is limited. The detention of Dr. Beltrán shows that Colombia does not respect these fundamental human and trade union rights.

The large number of political prisoners in Colombian prisons – be they academics, trade unionists or other social activists – and the number of unionised teachers that have been murdered are also proof that human rights have not been respected by the Colombia state.

On behalf of teachers throughout the world, we therefore urge you to put an end to this shameful situation by securing a fair trial for Dr. Beltrán, followed by his immediate release and prompt payment of compensation.

Yours sincerely,