

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 16, 2007

Doctor Mario Germán Iguarán Arana
Attorney General of the Nation
Ministry of Justice
Diagonal 22-B (Avenida Luis Carlos Galán)
No. 52-01
Bogotá
COLOMBIA

FAX: 011-(571) 570-2017

Dear Attorney General Iguarán:

We are writing to express our deep concern about criminal charges against Dr. Ivan Cepeda. Dr. Cepeda is a courageous human rights defender who has selflessly promoted the rights of victims of Colombia's civil war and created a national social movement to call for justice. He is founder and director of the National Movement for Victims of State Crimes, an umbrella organization of more than 200 Colombian human rights organizations.

We are alarmed that a prosecutor (Quinta Delegada, Circuito de la Ciudad de Sincelejo, Radicado 70763) is investigating charges against Dr Cepeda for slander and libel. We understand that these charges relate to comments made by Dr. Cepeda calling for the resignation of the Mayor of San Onofre, Jorge Blanco. We also understand that formal complaints have been lodged with the prosecutor against the mayor accusing him of connections with paramilitary organizations.

Regardless of the merits of the accusations against the mayor, it is the right of Dr. Cepeda and every citizen to criticize public officials and even to call for their resignation. It is especially important that citizens should not feel constrained in speaking openly about the observance of human rights principles by state officials.

We do not believe Dr. Cepeda's comments constitute slander or libel.

We are also alarmed that on May 3, 2007, this same prosecutor attempted to enter the Senate Human Rights Commission allegedly in search of confidential information about Dr. Cepeda for use in his investigation against him.

We are concerned that the charges against Dr. Cepeda are politically motivated and form part of a broader pattern of instigating specious legal proceedings against Colombian human rights defenders in order to discredit them.

We call on you to take the appropriate steps that would allow the charges against Dr. Cepeda to be dropped. We further urge that the tactic of investigating and charging Colombian

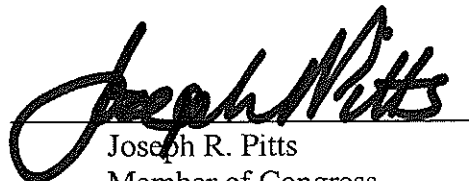
human rights defenders with offences where there is no adequate evidence to support those charges cease.

In the event that the charges against Dr. Cepeda are not dropped, we call on you to appoint an independent, objective and impartial prosecutor based in Bogotá to ensure a fair and balanced legal process. It is inappropriate for a local prosecutor in Sucre to be in charge of an investigation involving a mayor of the same Department.

Sincerely,



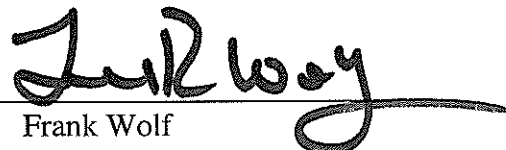
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



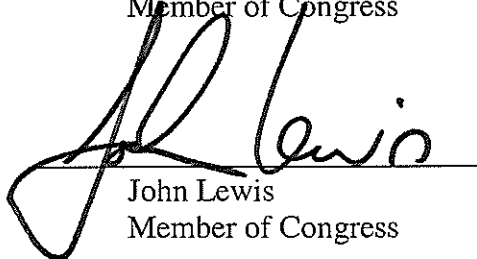
Joseph R. Pitts
Member of Congress



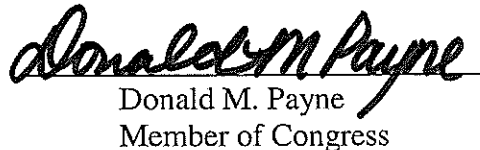
Tom Lantos
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Frank Wolf
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John Lewis
Member of Congress



Donald M. Payne
Member of Congress



Rosa L. DeLauro
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James L. Oberstar
Member of Congress



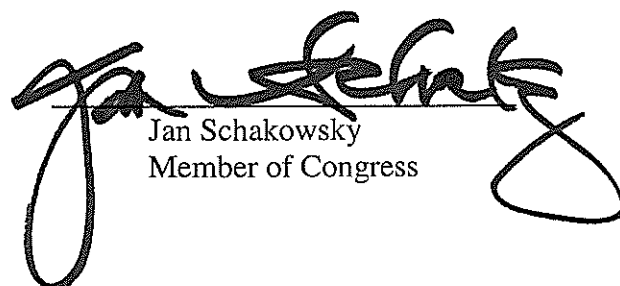
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Robert Wexler
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Linda T. Sanchez
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Phil Hare
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