



Video release :

Luis Guillermo Perez, Colombian human rights defender, currently living in exile in Belgium and to date still under the surveillance of the Colombian secret services, revisits fifteen years of persecution

Brussels, on June 14, 2010

Within the framework of the recent revelations regarding the continued surveillance operations carried out on the European soil by the Colombian Administrative Department of Security (D.A.S.) and aiming at blocking the action of several human rights organizations, Protection International has published the online testimony of Luis Guillermo Perez, Secretary General of the International Federation of Human Rights and one of the main targets of the D.A.S. operations. These alarming revelations raise serious concerns over violations of fundamental human rights in a moment when Colombia and the European Union, have just signed, a free trade agreement in Madrid.

This video is consultable on: <http://www.protectionline.org/Luis-Guillermo-Perez-a-defender.html>

For some years now, D.A.S., the Colombian secret services, have been under a judicial enquiry for monitoring the activities of human rights defenders, lawyers of the Supreme Court and political leaders.

On 15th and 20th April 2010, Colombian television channel RCN-TV revealed that the CTI, the Colombian Judicial Police seized a file entitled "*Europa*". According to this file, the D.A.S. required German Villalba, assistant director of the section "human information" to set up surveillance operations in Europe to monitor perceived opponents of the current Colombian Government. Among the targets of this operation, is Luis Guillermo Perez, a Colombian human rights defender, Secretary General of the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) and exiled in Belgium.

In October 2009, Luis Guillermo's home was burgled: three computers and an external hard drive containing confidential information were taken. Luis Guillermo Perez denounced this crime to the police. He is not the only victim of this alleged Colombian operation. Various NGOs of which ODHACO (the International Office of Human Rights Action on Colombia), Broederlijk Delen and Oxfam-Solidarity would also have been under surveillance. "The Europa operation was also directed against the Sub-commission on Human Rights of the European Parliament and, suspected actions against the Committee Daniel Gillard and Peace Brigades International- Colombia Project (PBI). All this was set up to try and discredit the work of the defenders in Europe", explains Luis Guillermo Perez.

On March 25th, a meeting was organized by the Colombian Embassy in Belgium, between Felipe Muñoz, the director of the D.A.S., Luis Guillermo Perez and the Belgian NGOs who suspected they had been under surveillance, in presence of the MP Bruno Tuybens (SP.A), in order to allow the victims to obtain explanations on the activities of the D.A.S. According to the D.A.S., the operations revealed would not take place from now on any more. "At this occasion, I asked them that they give me all the files they have on me. They answered; it is a national security issue and I needed a legal order to obtain the file. I obtained the order but I was only sent information affirming they have a file against me similar to those files they on Senator Piedad Cordoba and journalist Holmann Morris. Now we want to oblige the D.A.S. to hand over all the files they have on us. "

Following this meeting, the FIDH wrote a report denouncing the illegal nature of these activities carried out by D.A.S. "I have just received a document of 7 pages from the D.A.S. in reaction to this report. The Director states he does not carry out illegal activities but admitted to developing surveillance strategies in Europe against me and other defenders. According to the Director, this is

set up within the framework of the new law on the intelligence”, declares Luis Guillermo Perez, whose mother, now resident in Uccle, also received telephone threats in the last two months.

The implication of the European security services, particularly the Belgian security forces, remains of great concern. Due to this concern, Luis Guillermo Perez asked for a meeting with the chief of Belgian Intelligence Services to raise this issue. Currently, only Mr. Perez and ODHACO are registered as civil plaintiffs. Other NGOs and the Members of the European Parliament concerned should follow. These revelations are particularly important right now as a free trade agreement between Colombia and the European Union has just been signed. “We are against this treaty and we have worked for three years to prevent it being signed. It is necessary to pressure the Colombian Government to stop the ongoing persecution of magistrates and human rights defenders. The American Congress did not want to ratify a treaty because of the serious violations of the human rights in Colombia. The European Union on the other hand decided to continue discussions on the agreement without making the respect of these human rights in Colombia paramount. We worked with political groups and I think there exists a real concern in some of them. But the majority from the right, which openly supported the Uribe Government, prioritise economic interests over the situation of human rights defenders”, concluded Luis Guillermo Perez.

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