

Colombian Human Rights Defender, Principe Gabriel Gonzalez Arango, Released from Jail

Colombian human rights defender Principe Gabriel Gonzalez Arango was released from prison after a Judge in Bucaramanga, Santander department, acquitted him of all charges. The Judge found that the rebellion charges against Mr. Gonzalez were baseless and relied on witness evidence and government reports which lacked impartiality and credibility.

Mr. Gonzalez is Regional Coordinator of the independent human rights organization, the Political Prisoners Solidarity Committee (*Fundacion Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos* (FCSPP)), and was imprisoned for over one year. Since January 4, 2006, he was detained in Bucaramanga, Santander Department, falsely accused of rebellion and being in charge of an urban militia force.

Human Rights First has engaged in extensive advocacy with the Colombian and United States government, as well as international organizations, calling for Mr Gonzalez's release. The judgment validates concerns that the charges were politically motivated; part of a broader practice of instigating specious legal proceedings against FCSPP leaders and other human rights defenders to intimidate them and obstruct their legitimate activities.

These proceedings have stigmatized Mr Gonzalez as being a FARC guerrilla member and he is now at high risk of reprisal attacks from paramilitary forces. In the past, human rights defenders have been found innocent of rebellion charges, only to be attacked or killed upon their release. The Colombian Interior Ministry must urgently provide Mr Gonzalez with adequate protection to prevent such an attack.

More information: [Human Rights First Calls for Gonzalez's Release, January 2007](#)