



February 4, 2010

Hillary Rodham Clinton  
Secretary of State  
United States Department of State  
Harry S. Truman Building  
2201 C Street, NW, Room 7226  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton,

**We, the below-signed 4,103 individuals, join Human Rights First** in writing to express our concern about the baseless prosecution of Colombian activist [Gabriel Gonzalez](#)<sup>1</sup>.

We are aware that members of your department also met with Gabriel and we wanted to draw your attention to a recent [Los Angeles Times editorial](#) about his case<sup>2</sup>. Gabriel has been the victim of a baseless criminal prosecution alleging his membership in the FARC guerrilla forces. When he testified before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission (convened by Chair McGovern) and met with your office in October 2009 he had already been detained for 15 months, acquitted and then convicted again on the same specious charges.

Now the Colombian Supreme Court has denied the admissibility of Gabriel's final request for an extraordinary remedy. Gabriel faces the prospect of serving another 7 years of unjust detention.

We are alarmed that the Colombian Inspector-General's office (*procuraduria*) has spearheaded the campaign to put Gabriel back in prison. **USAID administers approximately \$3 million of annual aid to this institution.** We believe that the U.S. government should be leveraging this aid to ensure much better performance and to ensure that the Inspector General intervenes consistently to recommend the closure of specious cases rather than appealing baseless convictions.

We urge you to express your concern about Gabriel's case to the Colombian Inspector-General's office and the Prosecutor-General's office (*fiscalia*) (as expressed in the [2007 State department human rights report](#))<sup>3</sup>. Gabriel's case number is 68001-3104-008-2006-00179-01 (NI 061138) (Casacion No 32,145). We

**HEADQUARTERS**  
333 Seventh Avenue  
13th Floor  
New York, NY 10001  
Tel: 212.845.5200  
Fax: 212.845.5299

**WASHINGTON D.C. OFFICE**  
100 Maryland Avenue, N.E.  
Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20002  
Tel: 202.547.5692  
Fax: 202.543.5999

[www.humanrightsfirst.org](http://www.humanrightsfirst.org)

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/defenders/hrd\\_colombia/hrd\\_colombia\\_page.aspx?item=31&c=c1](http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/defenders/hrd_colombia/hrd_colombia_page.aspx?item=31&c=c1)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/editorials/la-ed-gonzalez21-2010jan21,0,3273510.story>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100633.htm>

understand that Gabriel will file another appeal before the Colombian courts shortly and once filed we hope that you will contact these two institutions to urge them to acquiesce to Gabriel's legal motions and put an end to the legal proceedings.

Gabriel's case is just the tip of the iceberg – as Human Rights First documented in its [February 2009 report](#) the use of specious criminal investigations to silence activists is widespread in Colombia<sup>4</sup>. Gabriel's case demonstrates the need for systemic reform.

We urge you to make sure that U.S. aid to the Colombia prosecutor general's office is used to ensure that a unit in Bogotá, such as the humanitarian affairs unit, coordinates the review of all investigations against human rights defenders. (The human rights unit plays a similar role in relation to forced disappearance investigations). Such a review would close specious investigations promptly and would deter regional prosecutors from bringing trumped-up charges in the first place. U.S. assistance should be used to guarantee due process rights for human rights activists.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We will continue to monitor this case closely.

Sincerely,

*(The names of the 4,103 signatories have been removed for privacy reasons.)*

---

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/defenders/reports/index.aspx>