

COMUNICADO DE PRENSA

Intelligence should be used to protect human rights, rather than to violate them

Bogotá, 3 May 2020. The Office in Colombia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights affirms its support for and solidarity with the work of human rights defenders, journalists, members of political parties, judges and others in Colombia.

According to reports published by the periodical the *Semana*, Foundation for the Freedom of the Press (*Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa*) and various human rights organizations, 130 persons have been subjected to “profiling and monitoring”, in order to develop military intelligence reports detailing the lives and activities of foreign and domestic journalists, judges, human rights defenders, lawyers involved in cases related to extrajudicial executions, politicians and current and former Government officials.

The UN Human Rights Office in Colombia is deeply concerned by these reports, which speak to attacks against the work of human rights defenders, among others. On Friday, 1 May 2020, the Colombian Ministry of Defense announced the withdrawal of 11 officials from their posts, as well as other measures adopted for “presumed irregularities in the use of military intelligence capabilities”. The UN Human Rights Office notes and acknowledges the measures adopted and reiterates the urgent need to undertake additional actions to prevent the repetition of such events.

In 2009, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights recommended that Colombia “take specific measures to ensure that all intelligence services respect human rights and are subject to strict civilian and legal controls, to move forward in the investigations of the material and intellectual perpetrators of the crimes committed, and to implement an effective mechanism for purging the files with the active participation of the Procurator General.”

UN Human Rights Colombia recalls that, in accordance with international human rights standards, the regulation and implementation of intelligence activities must comply with, rather than undermine, guarantees to protect human rights. Constant supervision and control over intelligence activities is thus essential.

COMUNICADO DE PRENSA

Colombia is a State party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as other international human rights treaties, which it is obligated to respect, protect and fulfill. Strengthening democratic space requires creating a conducive environment: one that guarantees the free exercise of human rights, freedom of the press, freedom of opinion, freedom of association and freedom of political participation.

On International Press Day, the UN Human Rights Office in Colombia salutes the work of journalists, whose work to seek and disclose factual information and stimulate the participation of a diversity of voices is fundamental in a democratic society and thus must be protected, with all necessary guarantees, in order to ensure its full and free exercise.