

Oidhaco welcomes the fact that the expansion of military criminal jurisdiction has been declared unconstitutional

There must be no further draft legislation put forward on the expansion of military jurisdiction

European countries and the European Union should ask the Santos government to desist from this constitutional amendment because it goes against the rights of victims and promotes impunity

Brussels, October 29, 2013. Oidhaco welcomes the decision of the Constitutional Court to declare unconstitutional the expansion of military criminal jurisdiction. We welcome this decision which was taken after opposition to the legislation by some Members of Congress. However, we regret that the Constitutional Court has chosen to base this declaration on formal errors in the processing of this constitutional amendment in the Colombian Congress, rather than ruling on its content.

Oidhaco asks the European Union and European countries to adopt a firm position before the government of Juan Manuel Santos, to avoid this reform being presented again. We are concerned that, immediately after its annulment by the Constitutional Court, the Colombian government announced its intention to urgently put forward a new reform. As unanimously expressed by United Nations mechanisms and national and international human rights organisations, the reform would encourage impunity. As we said at the time, *“the expansion of military criminal jurisdiction protects members of the security forces and leaves the victims unprotected. It gives the green light to the security forces to continue committing crimes”*.

Oidhaco reminds the European Union of the letter sent by MEPs to President Santos in which they expressed concern about this constitutional reform and called for legislation to combat impunity and for respect for the independence of justice by the Colombian government.

“We call on the EU and European countries to side with the victims. Such a reform could leave crimes against humanity unpunished, including more than 3,000 extrajudicial executions or ‘false positives’ committed by the Army”, says Vincent Vallies, **Oidhaco** spokesperson.

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The International Office on Human Rights - Action Colombia, represents a network of 35 European organisations. From its headquarters in Brussels, Oidhaco accompanies Colombian civil society initiatives which work towards the full respect of human rights and international humanitarian law, and a negotiated solution to the internal armed conflict. Since 2012, Oidhaco has been granted Special Consultative Status before the United Nations Economic and Social Council.