

NEW YORK CITY BAR

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Honorable Juan Manuel Santos
Presidente de la República de Colombia
Palacio de Naríño
Carrera 8ª N° 7-26
Bogotá, Colombia

Dear President Santos,

I am writing on behalf of the New York City Bar Association to express our deep concern regarding the case of Mónica Roa, a prominent women's rights advocate in Colombia who currently faces a criminal complaint for slander filed by a senior official in the national Inspector-General's Office (*Procuraduría*). We fear that the complaint—which appears to have been based on assertions made by Ms. Roa in a petition for the protection of fundamental rights (*tutela*)—could severely undermine the right to seek judicial protection of basic rights in Colombia. Furthermore, we are worried for Ms. Roa's safety in light of a recent reported attack on her organization's office in Bogotá.

Ms. Roa has had a highly distinguished career promoting women's rights in her country and across the globe. Currently, she is the program director at Women's Link Worldwide, an international human rights NGO that promotes gender equality. Among her many accomplishments is the petition she filed before Colombia's Constitutional Court that led to its landmark 2006 decision to partially decriminalize abortion.

In September 2011, Ms. Roa led a group of women in filing a petition for the protection of fundamental rights against Colombia's Inspector-General and two of his deputies. The petition claimed that the officials had violated the women's fundamental right to information by spreading distorted information about Colombian women's

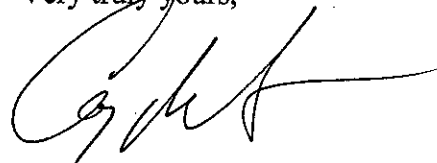
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reproductive rights. On March 1, 2012, Ms. Roa learned that one of the officials in the Inspector-General's Office who was referred to in the petition had filed a criminal complaint against her for libelous slander (*injuria y calumnia*), apparently based on the claims she had made in the petition.

On May 7, a shot was fired against the window of Women's Link Worldwide's Bogotá headquarters while Ms. Roa was inside, according to Colombia's national Ombudsman's Office and press reports. This reported act of intimidation occurred less than two weeks after a computer had been stolen from the office.

We are deeply troubled by this latest incident and the criminal complaint against Ms. Roa, which could have a chilling effect on rights defenders in Colombia—particularly those advocating for women's rights. It is crucially important that authorities take the necessary measures to ensure that human rights defenders like Ms. Roa are able to seek judicial protection of fundamental rights without facing the possibility of criminal prosecution. We also urge the appropriate authorities to take the necessary steps to ensure Ms. Roa's safety.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carey R. Dunne', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Carey R. Dunne