



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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Colombia

Decision adopted by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians at its 164th session (virtual session, 8 to 20 March 2021)



© Photo courtesy Galán family

COL-07 – Luis Carlos Galán Sarmiento

Alleged human rights violations

- ✓ Murder

A. Summary of the case

Senator Galán was murdered in 1989 while campaigning as a candidate for the presidential elections of 1990 and at a time when Colombia's drug cartels' response to state efforts to put an end to drug trafficking had become ever more violent.

After an initial diversion of the course of justice, the case took on fresh momentum in 2011. In September of that year, the Supreme Court convicted and sentenced a high-profile Colombian politician to a 24-year prison term for ordering the crime. The murder, which was subsequently qualified as a crime of humanity, was carried out with the involvement of General Miguel Maza Márquez, at the time Director of the Administrative Department of Security, who was sentenced in 2016 to a 30-year prison term for the crime. General Maza worked together with the then paramilitary leader, Mr. Henry de Jesús Pérez Durán, who in turn had been hired for this purpose by the Medellín drug cartel led by Mr. Pablo Escobar.

Many believed that Senator Galán was destined to win the presidential elections in 1990 and to deliver on his promise of extraditing to the United States of America the drug lords who were creating havoc in Colombia.

Case COL-07

Colombia: Parliament affiliated to the IPU

Victim: Independent member of parliament

Qualified complainant(s): Section I.(1)(a) of the [Committee Procedure](#) (Annex I)

Submission of complaint: October 2008

Recent IPU decision: March 2014

IPU mission: [October 2010](#)

Recent Committee hearing(s): - - -

Recent follow-up:

- Communications from the authorities: Letter from the Speaker of the Colombian National Congress (January 2017); letter from the Prosecutor's Office (February 2014)
- Communication from the complainant: July 2018
- Communication addressed to the authorities: Letter addressed to the Speaker of the Colombian National Congress (January 2021)
- Communication addressed to the complainant: July 2018

In December 2020, the Prosecutor's Office decided to officially investigate two other generals for their alleged direct involvement in the assassination.

B. Decision

The Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians

1. *Recalls* that Senator Galán's assassination shook Colombian society to its core and showed the power and unscrupulousness of the drug cartels and their allies to do whatever it took to pursue and protect their criminal activities; *is deeply concerned* in this regard that the legal proceedings have revealed the extent to which senior political and state officials were involved and working in tandem with illegal groups to execute this highly publicized crime; *stresses*, therefore, that it remains critically important for the Colombian authorities to do everything possible to eliminate drug trafficking and its possible infiltration into politics and state entities;
2. *Considers*, nevertheless, that in this case the pursuit of justice, despite being confronted with initial obstacles in the years immediately following Senator Galán's assassination, has largely been successful in shedding light on the identity, *modus operandi* and motives of those responsible and in holding them to account;
3. *Decides*, therefore, to close the case in accordance with section IX, paragraph 25, and in particular 25(b), of its Procedure for the examination and treatment of complaints in the absence of any further updated information from the complainant to show that further action by the Committee would be warranted;
4. *Requests* the Secretary General to convey this decision to the parliamentary authorities and to the complainant.