



**International
Federation
of Journalists**

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President

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Your Excellency,

On behalf of the International Federation of Journalists I am shocked to learn of the public accusations made in recent days by President Alvaro Uribe against Carlos Lozano, a newspaper editor and journalist in Colombia.

The President's statements are unconscionable. Implicating a well-known and committed journalist of associating with the guerrilla group FARC puts this man's life at risk from reprisals by extremists.

What is more, there is no foundation for these accusations and none is provided by President Uribe. It is impossible not to conclude that this is a cynical attempt to intimidate and silence a vocal and eloquent critic of the President's administration and as such constitutes a serious violation of press freedom.

In recent days I met with Mr. Lozano in London and we discussed efforts to strengthen professionalism and solidarity within Colombian journalism – something that is urgently needed given the continuing pressure being felt across the country by media professionals at all levels.

He is a consummate professional; aware and courageous in his reporting and someone who has already received death threats for the uncompromising principle he applies to his journalism. President Uribe's accusations against him are irresponsible and do damage to the cause of free journalism throughout Colombia.

The International Federation of Journalists insists on a full explanation for this intemperate attack, a public withdrawal of all unsubstantiated allegations and a clear statement from the President that the government will do nothing to prejudice the safety and security of people working in journalism.

It is of no comfort for us to note that President Uribe has made similar accusations in the past against his critics, some of whom are distinguished campaigners for human rights of international reputation. That only confirms our fears that this is a potentially

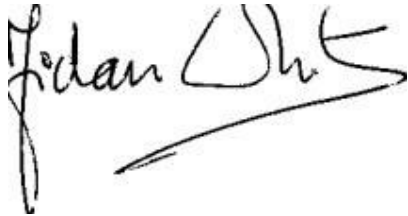
reckless attempt to stifle public debate about the actions of the government and its policies.

My concern is further heightened as many of those on the receiving end of such accusations in the past have subsequently been murdered or subjected to other violence.

I can assure you that I will be paying close attention to Mr. Lozano's situation.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aidan White". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Aidan White
General Secretary
International Federation of Journalists