

Open Letter to President Juan Manuel Santos

Dear Mr. President,

We, the undersigned, are writing to demand the immediate release from prison of Colombian academic Dr Miguel Angel Beltran. Dr Beltran has been imprisoned since May 2009 without being convicted of any crime whatsoever. He has been accused of 'rebellion' and branded a terrorist by the Colombian State, yet no evidence has been provided to back up the allegations.

We are deeply concerned that Dr Beltran, like so many others in Colombia, has been jailed for his political beliefs rather than for any crime; that he is being deprived of his liberty in order to silence him and discourage others like him from speaking out. We believe that academic freedom and freedom of expression are fundamental rights, and a pillar of democratic society, but Dr Beltran's ongoing detention shows that Colombia currently respects neither.

We therefore urge you to order his immediate release. The large number of political prisoners in Colombia's jails – be they academics, trade unionists, community leaders or other civil society activists – belies claims that human rights are being respected by the Colombian State.

We urge you to put an end to this shameful situation without delay.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Richard Roberts, Nobel Prize Winner
Professor Sir John Ball, Sedleian Professor of Natural Philosophy, University of Oxford
Professor Dame Janet Nelson, Emeritus Professor of History, King's College London
Alan Whitaker, President, University and College Union
Terry Hoad, Vice President, University and College Union
Dr Sally Hunt, General Secretary, University and College Union

Professor Jane Aaron, University of Glamorgan
Professor David Allen, Sheffield Hallam University
Professor Sarah Ashwin, London School of Economics
Professor Ruth Aylett, Heriot-Watt University
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Professor Malcolm Barber, University of Reading
Professor Ann-Marie Bathmaker, West of England University
Professor Gargi Bhattacharyya, Aston University
Professor Andreas Bieler, University of Nottingham
Professor Bob Brecher, University of Brighton
Professor David Broomhead, University of Manchester
Professor David Bunce, Brunel University
Professor Alister Burr, University of York
Professor Paul Busch, University of York
Professor Ray Bush, University of Leeds
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Professor Anthony Carbery, University of Edinburgh
Professor David Chadwick, University of Kent
Professor Thomas Collett, University of Sussex
Professor Helen Colley, Manchester Metropolitan University
Professor Mike Coombes, Newcastle University
Professor Christine Cooper, University of Strathclyde
Professor Greville Corbett, University of Surrey
Professor Owen Davies, University of Hertfordshire
Professor Mary Davis, London Metropolitan University
Professor Peter Delves, University College London
Professor Simon Duncan, University of Bradford
Professor Richard Dyer, King's College London
Professor Chris Eilbeck, Heriot-Watt University
Professor Lawrie Elliott, Edinburgh Napier University
Professor Tony Evans, University of Southampton
Professor Stephan Feuchtwang, London School of Economics
Professor Jeremy Field, University of Sussex
Professor Karl Figlio, University of Essex
Professor Rajmil Fischman, Keele University
Professor Roderick Flower, University of London
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Professor Heather Joshi, University of London
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