

Ms Baroness Catherine Ashton
High Representative of the Union
for Foreign Affairs & Security
Policy

European External Action Service
1046 Brussels
[Letter sent by e-mail]

Dear Ms Ashton,

I am writing to express the concern of the European Trade Union Confederation regarding the imprisonment of the Colombian trade union leader, Hubert de Jesús Ballesteros Gomez, on 25 August 2013.

This trade union leader who is a member of the Executive Council of the Central Unitaria de Trabajadores de Colombia (CUT) was playing an important role in the national strikes which are currently taking place in Colombia.

Hubert Ballesteros has been one of the ten spokespersons for the Mesa de Interlocución y Acuerdo (MIA) since the 19 August 2013, the body responsible for negotiating with the government. This arrest took place in a climate of mobilisations and national strikes by workers' and social organisations from various sectors at national level, a movement that is supported by the national trade union centres, CUT, CTC and CGT and the Confederación de Pensionados. The Colombian government has refused to engage in dialogue and continues its campaign of repression.

We are deeply concerned that despite the guarantees given by Colombia to respect trade union rights, notably in the context of the Free Trade Agreement with the EU, a prominent trade union leader such as Huber Ballesteros could be arrested in what appears to be an attempt to intimidate the organisations involved in the national strikes. We therefore urge you and the Commission to do everything possible to ensure the release of Hubert Ballesteros and to obtain guarantees from the Colombian authorities, in line with their commitments, ensuring the democratic right to freedom of expression for all trade unionists and social activists that are currently involved in the organisation of these collective actions.

I am copying this letter to Commissioners De Gucht and Andor.

Yours sincerely,



Bernadette Ségal
General Secretary