

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 17, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio,

We write in support of the rule of law and the integrity of the judicial system in Colombia. Your [statement](#) on July 28, 2025 regarding former President Álvaro Uribe is contrary to the principles of rule of law, sovereignty, and judicial independence. The people of Colombia deserve better from the U.S. government.

Colombia's judiciary has established a track record of judicial independence and checks on executive power.¹ During the 1990s and 2000s, the United States government invested in the strengthening of the judicial system, including judicial and Constitutional reforms modeled in part on the U.S. system.² Past State Department human rights reports have affirmed Colombia's judicial independence. For example, the 2023 report found that "The law provided for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected judicial independence and impartiality."³

On July 28, Judge Sandra Heredia of the Circuit Court of Bogotá found Uribe guilty of witness tampering and procedural fraud, for which he was sentenced to 12 years of house arrest.

The case began in 2012 when Uribe accused then-Congressman Iván Cepeda Castro of bribing witnesses who testified in Congress that the former president and his brother had helped found the paramilitary group Bloque Metro. In 2018, the Supreme Court dismissed Uribe's complaint and instead opened an investigation into Uribe (who had by then become a senator) after finding evidence that he, not Cepeda, had been tampering with witnesses. Uribe resigned from the Senate, which resulted in the case shifting from the Supreme Court to lower courts.⁴ Prosecutors in the office of then-Prosecutor General Francisco Barbosa (who was nominated by former President Iván Duque of

¹ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/colombia/freedom-world/2024>; <https://cej.org.co/sala-de-prensa/justiciometro/confianza-de-los-colombianos-en-la-justicia/>; "Building a Bridge between Reality and the Constitution: The Establishment and Development of the Colombian Constitutional Court," *International Journal of Constitutional Law*. 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1093/icon/mov043>

² GAO. (September 1992). Foreign Assistance: Promising Approach to Judicial Reform in Colombia. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/nsiad-92-269.pdf>; "Plan Colombia." (March 14, 2001) State Department fact sheet. <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/fs/2001/1042.htm>; Department of Justice, "Colombia: ICITAP Conducts Training Exclusively for Judicial Experts in 'Communication of the Expert During the Criminal Proceeding'," <https://www.justice.gov/archives/criminal/criminal-icitap/blog/colombia-icitap-conducts-training-exclusively-judicial-experts-communication-expert>

³ https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/528267_COLOMBIA-2023-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf

⁴ The Supreme Court in Colombia has jurisdiction over cases involving Senators and other high government officials. Once Uribe had resigned his seat, he was subject instead to 'ordinary justice' in the lower courts.

Uribe's *Centro Democrático* party) sought multiple times to dismiss the case, but judges blocked each of these attempts.⁵ Barbosa left office in February 2024, and the case proceeded to trial under a prosecutor appointed by the new Prosecutor General, Luz Adriana Camargo. Under the procedures of the Colombian judicial system, jurisdiction of the case was subject to random assignment.⁶ In April 2024, the case was assigned to Judge Sandra Heredia. Heredia conducted 69 public hearings over 475 days and issued a ruling of more than 1,000 pages that addressed the evidence and defense arguments in great detail, and which took her nearly 10 hours to read when delivering her verdict.⁷

The case, which stretched over thirteen years, under three different Colombian presidents, and with prosecutors appointed by governments with diverse ideological positions, is not the result of one person's or party's political agenda, but a reflection of the detached impartiality of judicial institutions in Colombia. Uribe still has the right to appeal, which he is exercising.

Authentic rule of law demands that no person, no matter their status or position in government, be considered above the law. Your July 28 statement implies that you think that former President Álvaro Uribe should be.

Your statement claimed Uribe had committed no crime, and that he was the victim of "the weaponization of Colombia's judicial branch by radical judges." Inherent in such a statement is contempt for the independence of the judiciary, sovereign governance, and the rule of law in Colombia. It ignores the fact that former President Uribe was accorded full due process in a system that the United States government has recognized for its integrity. The Colombian Ombudsman's Office, which is an independent agency of the Public Ministry that is charged with protecting human rights, responded to your July 28 statement stating that such attacks on the judiciary "threaten judicial independence and weaken the rule of law."⁸ Having the U.S. Secretary of State use his office to amplify a false narrative about the judicial system in Colombia not only erodes respect for the rule of law, but also diminishes U.S. credibility as a leader in promoting good governance and human rights around the world.

⁵ Reuters, "Colombia Ex-president Uribe Guilty of Abuse of Process, Bribery of Public Official," <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/colombia-ex-president-uribe-guilty-abuse-process-bribery-public-official-2025-07-28/>; <https://www.lasillavacia.com/silla-nacional/fallo-contra-uribe-es-un-golpe-a-credibilidad-de-fiscalia-de-barbosa/>

⁶ El País (July 28, 2025), "El caso contra Álvaro Uribe, paso a paso: de la acusación de paramilitarismo a la condena por soborno a testigos y fraude procesal," <https://elpais.com/america-colombia/2025-07-28/el-caso-contra-alvaro-uribe-paso-a-paso-de-la-acusacion-de-paramilitarismo-al-veredicto-final-en-el-juicio-por-soborno-a-testigos.html>

⁷ El País (July 28, 2025), "El peso que cargó la jueza Sandra Heredia durante los 475 días del juicio contra Álvaro Uribe Vélez," <https://elpais.com/america-colombia/2025-07-29/el-peso-que-cargo-la-jueza-sandra-heredia-durante-475-dias-del-juicio-contra-alvaro-uribe-velez.html>

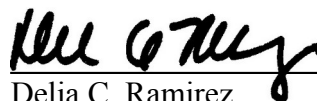
⁸ <https://x.com/DefensoriaCol/status/1949833188269854849>

Therefore, in the interest of strengthening the United States' reputation as a supporter of genuine rule of law in Colombia and around the world, and in order to send a signal to the people of Colombia that the United States stands with their quest for rule of law and accountability, we ask that you cease attacks on the independence of the Colombian judicial system and make clear that United States policy does not exempt anyone, even former Presidents, from the rule of law.

Sincerely,



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



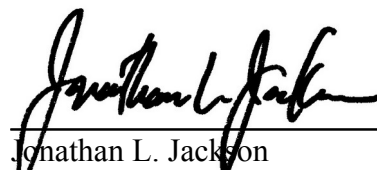
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



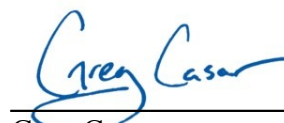
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress



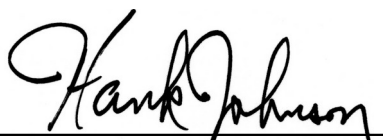
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



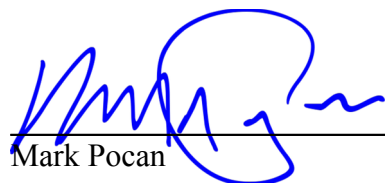
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