

**Freedom of Expression Case Law Database:  
Columbia University in collaboration with UNESCO, Dejusticia, FLIP, and Universidad Externado de Colombia,  
launch the Spanish Online Database of Case Law on Freedom of Expression**

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Columbia University has launched a Spanish language online global database of freedom of expression case law and court rulings, in partnership with UNESCO, Dejusticia, FLIP (Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa), and Universidad Externado de Colombia.

The database can be accessed through the following link: <https://globalfreedomofexpression.columbia.edu/espanol>

*"This initiative demonstrates the importance of creating multi-stakeholder synergies in support of protecting freedom of expression in the region,"* said Lidia Brito, Regional Director of UNESCO Montevideo Office.

The Spanish database includes significant decisions about Freedom of Expression and Access to Information from 16 Latin American countries and a number of other rulings from around the world, analyzed by a team of Colombian lawyers supervised by Catalina Botero Marino, an international human rights lawyer, and former Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States.

Dr. Agnes Callamard adds, *"Columbia Global Freedom of Expression is delighted by the opportunity to work with Latin American partners to launch this fantastic tool and resource. The Spanish Online Court Database recognizes our multi-cultural and multi-linguistic global community while highlighting the necessity to share legal and judicial trends regardless of frontiers, to protect freedom of expression and strengthen common grounds and common norms."*

The Spanish language database was developed following extensive consultations with Judges from Latin America, as part of a UNESCO program of work to strengthen the legal protection of freedom of expression in the continent. The process culminated in the Ibero-American Summit of Judges held in Paraguay in April 2016, when twenty-three Chief Justices from Latin America welcomed the Spanish court database and committed to contribute decisions to foster an exchange of knowledge and jurisprudence across the region on issues of freedom of expression, transparency and access to public information.

Catalina Botero Marino said, *"The protection of the right to freedom of expression is one of the conditions enabling a genuine democracy and judges are the last barrier to protect this freedom. The database presents a splendid opportunity to learn how judges in different states, are facing issues related to the exercise of freedom of expression. Thanks to this tool it is possible to identify existing national and regional trends. This tool also allows the learning of lessons that emerge from the best practices, and turns on alerts where there is a deficit in judicial protection. Finally, it is a valuable resource to encourage dialogue between the various judiciaries and public understanding about the important work of judges in the important task of defending freedom"*

**Columbia Global Freedom of Expression** was established in 2014 by Columbia University president Lee Bollinger, to advance understanding of the norms and institutions that best protect the free flow of information and expression. To achieve its objective, Columbia Global Freedom of Expression engages with a range of stakeholders, including academic experts, legal practitioners, judges, activists and students. It undertakes and commissions research and policy projects, organizes events and conferences, and participates and contributes to global debates on the protection of freedom of expression and information in the 21st century. For more information, please visit: <https://globalfreedomofexpression.columbia.edu/>

**About the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**

[UNESCO](#) is the United Nations agency with a mandate to defend freedom of expression and press freedom. Article 1 of its Constitution requires the Organization to "further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations." To realize this the Organization is requested to

"collaborate in the work of advancing the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples, through all means of mass communication and to that end recommend such international agreements as may be necessary to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image..."

As part of the Organization's regional efforts to improve and strengthen the knowledge and skills of judicial operators on international standards pertinent to promoting and protecting freedom of expression, UNESCO and its partners have implemented and coordinated a number of regional capacity building and knowledge sharing activities. These activities were carried out within the framework of the umbrella project, **Fostering the Role of the Judiciary System as Key Players in Promoting and Protecting Freedom of Expression in Latin America**. More than 3000 operators of the Judicial Systems of 22 countries in Ibero-America already took part of these activities, with a strong support of the Ibero-American Judicial Summit, the Ibero-American Network of Schools of Judges and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights Special Rapporteur of Freedom of Expression.

[Dejusticia](#) is a center for legal and social studies based in Bogotá, with the mission of strengthening the rule of law and promoting human rights in Colombia and the Global South. They are a research and advocacy center that produces rigorous investigation to promote social change, as well as campaigns, litigation, and educational and training programs. Since 2005, Dejusticia works in the following research areas: anti-discrimination, social, economic and cultural rights, rule of law, environmental justice, judicial systems, transitional justice, and drug policy. Their approach has three components: producing knowledge that contributes to understanding system failures and violations of rights; impacting the design of public policy through action campaigns, strategic litigation and participation in media and academic discussions; and promoting human rights training by using diverse formats and reaching a broad range of audiences —such as academics, judges, activists, grass-roots communities and policy-makers— through workshops, courses and conferences.

The **Foundation for Freedom of the Press (FLIP)** is a non-governmental organization in charge of monitoring attacks on freedom of the press in Colombia, developing activities that contribute towards protecting journalists, media outlets, and other citizens who exercise freedom of expression on matters of public interest in Colombia. It also promotes freedom of expression and access to information. FLIP provides advisory services and support to journalists so that freedom of expression is guaranteed by the state and recognized by the public as an important value in society. This is developed by promoting the strengthening of the fundamental right to freedom of expression from a broad perspective on analog and digital environments.

[Universidad Externado de Colombia](#) is one of the country's leading universities, dedicated to teaching and research in the social and human sciences. With over 10 academic departments, 17 undergraduate programs and 80 graduate options, the University frames its activities within a pluralist philosophy, open to all schools of thought, removed from dogmatism and respectful of all religious beliefs and political ideologies. The University promotes tolerance as a formula for accomplishing peace and progress within heterogeneity, welcomes students from every region in Colombia and considers diversity one of its major assets. In harmony with its liberal spirit, the University believes freedom is an inalienable right of all humans, has faith in democracy, in advancing the fight to perfect the social state under the Rule of Law, while seeking equality in the social and economic spheres and the respect of fundamental rights.

### **About Columbia University**

Among the world's leading research universities, [Columbia University in the City of New York](#) continuously seeks to advance the frontiers of scholarship and foster a campus community deeply engaged in the complex issues of our time through teaching, research, patient care and public service. The University is comprised of 16 undergraduate, graduate and professional schools, and four affiliated colleges and seminaries in Manhattan, and a wide array of research institutes and global centers around the world. More than 40,000 students, award-winning faculty and professional staff define the University's underlying values and commitment to pursuing new knowledge and educating informed, engaged citizens. Founded in 1754 as King's College, Columbia is the fifth oldest institution of higher learning in the United States.

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