

# EUROPEAN CENTER FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS



## PRESS RELEASE

### Colombian General Freddy Padilla gives up his position as ambassador to Austria after allegations of international crimes

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*Berlin/ Bogotá/ Vienna, 7 October 2013* The Colombian Ambassador to Austria renounced his position after the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR) submitted a dossier on war crimes allegations against him. On 19 August 2013, ECCHR submitted a dossier on General Freddy Padilla de León to the Austrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, which was made public last week. Thereupon, the Colombian Chancellery announced that Padilla filed his resignation request a month ago – just a few weeks after the submission of the ECCHR-dossier – and that he will formally resign and return to Colombia in November 2013.

Until 2010, Padilla held the highest military positions in the Colombian Armed Forces. During his time in office, many extrajudicial executions were carried out by the military (so-called false positive cases). Padilla has yet to be held criminally accountable for his role in these cases as supreme commander. Since 2010 he is accredited as Colombian ambassador to Austria and several other countries as well as to the Office of the United Nations in Vienna.

Since receiving the dossier, the Austrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs is investigating the allegations against Padilla, as well as examining possible diplomatic responses. Wolfgang Kaleck, General Secretary of ECCHR, explains: “States have the obligation to seriously investigate allegations of international crimes, also when accrediting diplomats. In this regard, the conduct of the Austrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs is exemplary; the Ministry has not only examined the allegations internally, but also, has referred them to the appropriate judicial authorities.” Despite this commendable response, it remains an open question whether the Ministry should have investigated more seriously when Padilla was initially accredited.

ECCHR calls upon all European states, as well as the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, to consider opening formal investigations and issuing a detention order in the event that General Padilla remains in Europe after losing his diplomatic status. “In the first place, it is undoubtedly the obligation of the Colombian justice system to investigate and prosecute grave human rights violations. In light of all the information indicating his responsibility, it should seriously investigate this information in preparation for General Padilla’s return to Colombia”, demands Wolfgang Kaleck.

**More information** as well as the **dossier** available here:

<http://www.ecchr.de/index.php/padilla-en.html>

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