

## Ellsberg Whistleblower Award 2026 goes to Andrés Olarte Peña.

An international jury has awarded the **Ellsberg Whistleblower Award 2026** to Colombian whistleblower **Andrés Olarte Peña**.

The whistleblower shared thousands of documents pointing to evidence that **Ecopetrol**, Colombia's biggest and majority state-owned company, engaged in:

- Severe environmental pollution, including contamination of water and wetlands with toxic substances and illegal flaring of methane gas;
- Concealment of incidents and deliberate failure to report violations;
- Targeted surveillance and retaliation against socio-environmental leaders;
- Collaboration with national security forces and convergence of interests with paramilitary armed groups.

Andrés Olarte worked at Ecopetrol from January 2017 to January 2019, first as an analyst and later as an environmental adviser to the Vice President of Sustainability. After blowing the whistle internally and exhausting all possible avenues, with no results, he contacted the **Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA)**. In March 2025 the EIA published the report [Crude Lies](#) along with a database, the [Iguana Papers](#), and the BBC released the documentary [Colombia: Petroleum, Pollution and Paramilitaries](#).

The investigations provide a chilling insight into the practices of a resource company in one of the **world's most dangerous countries for environmental activists**.

While Colombia is taking steps towards an energy transition, it **continues to export large volumes of fossil fuels**. Especially in an industry that poses a risk to climate and environment, whistleblowing and investigative journalism are indispensable to ensure compliance with environmental and human rights standards. This must be recognized and supported both in Colombia and in importing countries.

In choosing the winner from numerous whistleblower cases that all deserve recognition, **the jury – representatives from journalism and whistleblower organizations worldwide – emphasized:** The case of Andrés Olarte exemplifies the extraordinary courage of a whistleblower taking immense personal risks to expose wrongdoing of vast scale and impact. For his integrity, Olarte faced severe consequences: intimidation, anonymous death threats, and ultimately exile in Europe. These sacrifices underscore his exceptional commitment to the public interest.

*Andrés Olarte: "My motivation is change. I hope for structural reforms at Ecopetrol and in Colombia. Whistleblowing and transparency should not be a burden but a positive contribution."*

The 2026 award will be presented at a public evening event on **12 March in Berlin** at the taz Kantine.

**For further information and interview requests please contact:**

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[Photographic material available here](#)

**About the Award:**

The Ellsberg Whistleblower Award honors whistleblowers whose efforts have revealed information that significantly enhances public or scientific debate, strengthens the public's right to know, and thus supports democracy. It is named after Daniel Ellsberg, the preeminent whistleblower of his time, leaking the Pentagon Papers in 1971. The award carries a **€10,000 prize**.

**Jury members of the 2026 award:**

- Ricardo Balderas, [PODER](#)
- Annegret Falter, [Whistleblower-Netzwerk e.V. \(WBN\)](#)
- Gemma-Maé Hartley, [Plateforme de Protection des Lanceurs d'Alerte en Afrique \(PPLAAF\)](#)
- Richard Logan, [Reva and David Logan Foundation](#)
- Chido Onumah, [African Centre for Media & Information Literacy \(AFRICMIL\)](#)
- Enrique Patriau, [OjoPúblico](#)
- Ben Reiff, [+972 Magazine](#)
- Klaus Schleisiek, [Wau Holland Foundation](#)
- Sam Sole, [amaBhungane Centre for Investigative Journalism](#)
- Michael Sontheimer, [taz Panter Foundation](#)

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