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Dominican Republic must overturn decision depriving thousands of nationality

The Dominican Republic's insistence on depriving thousands of Dominicans of Haitian descent of their nationality will be one of the main talking points of the 5 February UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, which is due to examine the country's human rights records over the last four years.

Last September, the Dominican Constitutional Court ruled that anyone born in the country since 1929 to foreign parents who could not prove their regular migration status had been wrongly registered as Dominican and were never entitled to the Dominican nationality. This is the latest and most dramatic turn in a long story of discrimination mainly targeting Dominicans of Haitian descent. More than 250,000 people are believed to have lost their Dominican nationality and are now stateless.

"It's outrageous that Dominicans of Haitian descent are being denied their human rights, including their right to work, health and education," said Chiara Liguori, Amnesty International's researcher on the Caribbean.

"The implementation of the Constitutional Court ruling would be a gross human rights violation that cannot go ahead. While conditions for granting nationality are for each state to decide, international law provides that no one can be arbitrarily deprived of nationality."

The UN Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a mechanism under which the situation of human rights in all 193 UN Member States is regularly reviewed. Some of the key features of the review is that it applies equally to all States, covers all human rights, and is carried out by governments.

Chiara Liguori is available for interviews on this issue. Possible talking points:

- Long lasting discrimination against Dominicans of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic.
- Dramatic impact of the Constitutional Court ruling on the day-to-day life of hundreds of thousands.
- The Dominican Republic's violation of its international human rights obligations.

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