

URGENT ACTION

JOURNALISTS THREATENED AND HARASSED

Four journalists have been harassed and received death threats in the Dominican Republic as the result of their advocacy for the respect of the rights of Dominicans of Haitian descent.

On 2 February, four Dominican journalists, **Juan Bolívar Díaz, Huchi Lora, Amelia Deschamps** and **Roberto Cavada**, known for taking a strong stand against discrimination towards Dominicans of Haitian descent, reported a number of threats and acts of harassment they have suffered as a result of their work. Roberto Cavada reported being followed on 10 January by an unknown man who loudly called him “traitor of the homeland” in a supermarket and shouted, “we are going to kill all traitors and the first ones will be the journalists”. On 16 January, an unidentified man shouted at Amelia Deschamps in a supermarket in Santo Domingo “You are the first one who deserves to be killed! And after that, Huchi and Juan Bolívar! You are all traitors of the homeland!” On 26 January, during a protest organized by nationalist groups in the city of Santiago, a man stated on television that “the traitors of the motherland deserve death” and specifically named Juan Bolívar Díaz, Huchi Lora, and Roberto Cavada. The journalists also reported that in early 2014, an advertising firm unsuccessfully tried to print a large number of leaflets with caricatures of Juan Bolívar Díaz and Huchi Lora, calling them “traitors of the homeland” and calling for the “death of the traitors”.

The four journalists also filed two complaints at the prosecutor’s office in Santiago and Santo Domingo (National District). On 3 February, police informed the press that an investigation had been initiated. The same day, Juan Bolívar Díaz informed Amnesty International that the Minister of the Interior and a high-ranking police officer had visited him and told him that the President of the Republic had instructed them to carry out a thorough investigation.

Since the publication of the Dominican Constitutional Court controversial ruling 168-13 which retroactively deprived thousands of people of foreign descent of their Dominican nationality, individuals of Haitian descent, Haitian migrants, journalists and human rights defenders have reported an increasing number of threats and acts of intimidation against them.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to carry out a thorough, independent and timely investigation into the threats and harassment suffered by the four journalists, and bring those responsible to justice;
- Calling on them to publicly condemn these incidents and all acts of intimidation against journalists and human rights defenders, in particular those advocating for the rights of Dominicans of Haitian descent;
- Urging them to act immediately to ensure that all journalists in the country can safely carry out their work without fear of retaliation or threats.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 18 MARCH 2015 TO:

President of the Republic
 Danilo Medina
 Palacio Nacional, Avenida México
 esquina Doctor Delgado, Gazcue,
 Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
 Fax: +1809 682 0827
 Email: prensa2@presidencia.gob.do
 Twitter: @PresidenciaRD
Salutation: Dear President / Señor
Presidente

Attorney General
 Francisco Domínguez Brito
 Palacio de Justicia, Av. Jiménez Moya
 esq. Juan Ventura Simón
 Santo Domingo,
 Dominican Republic
 Email: info@pgr.gob.do
Salutation: Dear Attorney General/
Señor Procurador General

And solidarity messages to:
 Canal Tele Antillas,
 Programa Uno Más Uno
 Email: unomasuno@codetel.net.do

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In September 2013 the Dominican Constitutional Court established that Dominican children of irregular migrants born in the Dominican Republic between 1929 and 2010 had never been entitled to Dominican nationality and had to be stripped of it (ruling 168-13). The vast majority of those affected are Dominicans of Haitian descent.

Since then, the issue of the right to nationality and the fate of the thousands of people affected by ruling 168-13 has been a regular topic of public debate. Juan Bolívar Díaz, Huchi Lora, Amelia Deschamps, Roberto Cavada and other journalists have tried to promote the need to respect the rights of those affected. Many high-profile personalities have formed a solidarity committee with those affected and regularly advocate for human rights-based solutions to the situation created by the ruling and by previous administrative decisions taken by the Central Electoral Board. On the other hand, a number of nationalist politicians have maintained a very hostile discourse, spreading the idea that those journalists and human rights defenders serve foreign interests and encourage Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic.

Following this, hostile rhetoric, threats and acts of intimidation against individuals of Haitian descent, as well as Haitian migrants, journalists and human rights defenders have been increasingly reported. On 4 November 2013, Constitution Day, hundreds of people taking part in a nationalist demonstration in Santo Domingo shouted “death to the traitors”, according to reports received by Amnesty International. Moreover, a pamphlet titled “The Treason Album” was circulated in the demonstration, including names and photos of journalists, human rights defenders, and politicians who had criticized the decision of the Constitutional Court. On 13 November, during another nationalist demonstration, “death to the traitors” was shouted.

On 30 January 2014 the Inter-American Commission for Human rights (IACHR) issued precautionary measures on behalf of the members of the human rights organization Reconoci.do, who had been victims of harassment and threats. The IACHR demanded that the Dominican Republic take urgent measures to protect the life and physical integrity of the members of Reconoci.do, as well as measure to ensure that they are able to carry out their activities as human rights defenders free from violence and intimidation. Although the Dominican authorities collaborated with Reconoci.do for the implementation of the measures, they never publicly condemned those acts or other incidents suffered by those who advocate for the rights of Dominicans of Haitian descent.

Following the review of the Dominican Republic's periodic report on the implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, on 4 February 2015, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern “about reports that human rights defenders advocating for the rights of Haitian migrants and Dominicans of Haitian descent, including children, and/or denouncing child exploitation and trafficking, face hostility and harassment” and urged the Dominican authorities to “undertake all necessary measures to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish the harassment and attacks against human rights defenders, advocating for the rights of Haitian migrants and Dominicans of Haitian descent and/or denouncing child exploitation and trafficking”.

Name: Juan Bolívar Díaz (m), Huchi Lora (m), Amelia Deschamps (f) and Roberto Cavada (m)
Gender m/f: both

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