

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety

VENEZUELA

José Luis Urbano (m)
His family
Staff at *Pro-Defensa del Derecho a la Educación*

Human rights defender José Luis Urbano was shot and wounded on 10 February, in his home town of Barcelona, in the northern state of Anzoátegui. He is the president of an NGO working to protect the right to education, *Pro-Defensa del Derecho a la Educación* (Organisation for the Defence of the Right to Education). He is not receiving any official protection. The attack appears to have been linked to his public criticism of the quality of the education available to poor children in the state, and allegations of corruption.

Pro-Defensa del Derecho a la Educación had held a press conference on 9 February to publicise the quality of the education provided to poor children by the state, which they alleged was very deficient. They also alleged that charges were being levied for education, which is supposed to be free. Later that day, José Luis Urbano received an anonymous telephone threat warning him to *deja la marisquera (sic) porque te puede pasar algo* ("Stop fishing for information, because something could happen to you.")

José Luis Urbano and his wife were driving from their home to the centre of Barcelona in the afternoon of 10 February when a black Mitsubishi car pulled up next to theirs. Two men got out, and one stuck a gun through the window on José Luis Urbano's side. The other said, *métele, es el tipo de Pro-defensa* ("Shoot him, it's the guy from Pro-defensa"). José Luis Urbano managed to grab the gun barrel but the man fired and hit him in the stomach.

The attackers drove off, and José Luis Urbano and his wife drove to a hospital. On the way they waved down a police car, which went with them. Despite this, the attackers drove after them to the hospital. The *Defensor del Pueblo* (People's Ombudsman) ensured that José Luis Urbano was provided with police protection while he was in hospital. This ended when he left hospital on 20 February, despite the fact that his wife had made an official complaint about the attack to the police and the Ombudsman's office on 19 February. Amnesty International is not aware of any investigation being opened into this attack.

Pro-Defensa del Derecho a la Educación is planning a radio appeal to take place on 2-3 March, to collect funds to help poor children buy school materials. Amnesty International is seriously concerned that José Luis Urbano, his family or other members of staff at *Pro-Defensa del Derecho a la Educación* might be the target of another attack during or around the time of this appeal.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern that José Luis Urbano was shot and injured on 10 February in the State of Anzoátegui;
- expressing deep concern for the safety of José Luis Urbano, his family and staff at *Pro-Defensa del Derecho a la Educación*;
- stating that this attack appears to be linked to José Luis Urbano's public criticism of the state education system;
- urging the authorities to provide immediate protection to José Luis Urbano and his family, in accordance with his own wishes;
- demanding that the authorities order a thorough investigation and bring those responsible to justice;
- calling on the authorities to investigate all cases of threats and acts of intimidation against human rights defenders, victims of human rights violations and their families, bring the perpetrators to justice and offer adequate protection to the victims, in accordance with their wishes.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Justice and the Interior

Sr. Pedro Carreño

Ministerio del Poder Popular para Relaciones Interiores y Justicia

Av. Urdaneta, Edif. Sede MIJ, Piso 1, Carmelitas, Caracas

Fax: +58 212 506 1685

Salutation: Señor Ministro/Dear Minister

Attorney General

Dr. Isaías Rodríguez Díaz

Fiscal General de la República

Fiscalía General de la República

Edificio sede del despacho del Fiscal General de la Republica

Av. Universidad, Caracas, Venezuela

Fax: +58 212 576 4419

+58 212 578 3239

Salutation: Señor Fiscal General/ Dear Attorney General

COPIES TO:

Pro-Defensa del Derecho a la Educación

La Ponderosa – Sector 2

Calle Junín, n. 15

Barcelona, Estado Anzoátegui

Venezuela

Email: prodefensadelaeducacion@yahoo.com

and to diplomatic representatives of Venezuela accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 9 April 2007.