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Dominican Republic: Murder of a Haitian migrant during deportation must motivate the Dominican government to finally respect its international obligations

The Dominican authorities must guarantee respect for the human rights of migrant workers, Amnesty International said today following the murder of a Haitian migrant during an arbitrary expulsion operation.

Jean Robert Lores died as a consequence of the beating he received from immigration officials and police officers during a repatriation round-up on 14 May in the El Tanque district of Juan Dolio town, some 50 kms east of the capital, Santo Domingo.

According to his brother, who was there at the time, immigration officials accompanied by national police officers commenced the round-up at 4 in the morning, bursting into the house of Jean Robert Lores. Apparently, the officers prevented him from presenting his documentation, beat him repeatedly with the butts of their guns and kicked him once on the ground. Jean Robert Lores' brother asked the officers to let him take him to hospital but they refused.

According to statements from others detained during the raid, it was only after repeated requests that Jean Robert Lores was taken to hospital, where he died nine days later, on 23 May, of cardiorespiratory failure caused by injuries sustained during the beating. Jean Robert Lores, 31 years of age, apparently had a work visa and was working as a carpenter.

Amnesty International calls on the Dominican authorities to conduct an exhaustive, rapid, independent and impartial investigation into the death of Jean Robert Lores.

"Those responsible must be brought to justice so that such situations are never repeated," said Javier Zúñiga Mejía Borja, Amnesty International's special advisor.

Dominican NGOs working for migrants' rights are continually denouncing the collective expulsions of Haitian migrants because these take place in violation of international human rights standards and, furthermore, because the deportees have no right of appeal.

"The case of Jean Robert Lores is symbolic of the abuse suffered by Haitian migrants in the Dominican Republic. Discrimination, verbal and physical abuse from immigration officials and other members of the security forces, along with a lack of respect for due process during expulsion operations are just some of the obstacles facing many migrant workers," added Javier Zúñiga Mejía Borja.

"It is paradoxical and a bad omen that this case of ill-treatment and murder of a defenceless person has taken place at a time when the new draft Organic Police Law is being discussed in the National Congress, a law intended to improve the national police force's respect for human rights."

A number of U.N. bodies have repeatedly expressed their concern at recurrent complaints of mass, indiscriminate and arbitrary deportations affecting people of Haitian origin. More recently, in March 2013, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination deplored the Dominican Republic's lack of progress in tackling "the racial discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance that particularly affect the Dominican and Haitian population of black African origin and undocumented Haitian immigrants." The Committee repeated its previous

recommendation to “ensure that laws concerning deportation do not discriminate among non-citizens on the basis of race, colour or ethnic or national origin, and to put a halt to the mass deportations of non-nationals without due guarantees”.

Collective deportations are in contravention of the Memorandum of Understanding on the repatriation mechanism agreed between the Dominican and Haitian governments in December 1999. When it signed this agreement, the Dominican Republic undertook to improve its removal procedures and made a series of specific commitments, including not to conduct deportations at night and permitting deportees to take their belongings with them and to retain their identity documents.

Last October, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights convicted the Dominican Republic for the deaths of seven Haitian immigrant at the hands of Dominican soldiers while travelling in a lorry in Monte Cristi in June 2000. The Court concluded that due to the "unlawful, unnecessary and disproportional" use of force, the Dominican State was in violation of the right to life, and called on the country to re-open its investigation into the case. In the judgment, the Court recalled that the State had to adopt “all legal, administrative and other measures necessary to enforce the rights of migrants.”