

URGENT ACTION

MURDERS OF FAMILY CONTINUE; 17-YEAR-OLD KILLED

On the night of 16 May, 17-year-old Roni Barrios was murdered with a machete or axe in Aragua state, Venezuela. He is the tenth member of the Barrios family to be murdered since 1998 under circumstances that suggest police involvement. The authorities have failed to investigate the murders or protect the family from further violence.

The body of **Roni Barrios**, aged 17, was found on Thursday morning by his younger brother, near the home of his aunt, **Eloisa Barrios**. Roni Barrios had wounds to his head and neck, which may have been made with a machete or axe. Roni Barrios worked and lived in Caracas, but had gone back to his hometown of Guanayén, Aragua state, to visit relatives. He was last seen alive the night before.

Members of the Barrios family, from Aragua state, Venezuela, have suffered a campaign of threats and murders since 1998. Police officers in Aragua have allegedly been involved in these killings, which seem to have intensified recently – Roni's murder is the third in the 12-months. No one has ever been brought to justice for these crimes, which have been happening for fifteen years.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Call on the authorities to reveal what progress has been made in the investigations into the killings of all ten members of the family who have been killed since 1998 and into the intimidation and threats reported by the family;
- Urge the authorities to order a full and impartial investigation into the most recent murder of Roni Barrios and bring to justice those who are responsible;
- Request that the authorities take decisive action to guarantee the protection of all members of the Barrios family, in accordance with their wishes.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 1 JULY 2013 TO:

Attorney General

Dra. Luisa Ortega Díaz
Fiscal General de la República
Bolivariana de Venezuela
Edificio sede del Despacho de la Fiscal
General de la República
Esquinas de Misericordia a Pele El Ojo
Avenida México
Caracas, Venezuela
Email: ministeriopublico@mp.gob.ve
Salutation: Dear Attorney General /
Dra. Fiscal General

Aragua State Governor

Tareck el Assaimi
Gobernador de Aragua
Av. Las Delicias, Antigua sede
Edificio Corpoindustria, Piso 7
Maracay, Municipio Girardot
Aragua, Venezuela
Salutation: Dear Governor / Sr.
Gobernador

And copies to:

Aragua-based NGO

Comisión de Derechos Humanos de
Justicia y Paz del Estado Aragua
Calle Negro Primero, Oeste
N 98, frente al Liceo 'Valentin Espinal',
Cruce con Av. Ayacucho
Maracay, Estado Aragua,
Venezuela

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

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

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since 1998, ten members of the Barrios family from Venezuela's state of Aragua have been killed, allegedly by police forces, and so far no-one has been brought to justice for these crimes. Several other members of the family suffered multiple forms of intimidation, harassment, threats and attacks by the police. The surviving members of the family continue to be at risk of reprisals for their attempts to obtain justice for the crimes committed against their relatives.

In August 1998, **Benito Antonio Barrios**, aged 28, was at his home in Guanayén, state of Aragua, when a group of police entered the home, beat and took him away. Eyewitnesses, including members of his family, saw how he was beaten and taken away by four officers, handcuffed. Later that day, he was taken to a local hospital, already dead with gunshot wounds. The police's claimed that they went to his home due to a call informing them that two men were involved in a shooting. To date, the Venezuelan authorities have failed to provide an adequate explanation as to what happened to Benito Antonio Barrios at the hands of security forces.

In November 2003, two brothers of Benito Barrios, Luis Alberto and Narciso Barrios were involved in an argument with the police. Hours later, the police raided the homes of other members of the family – Brigida Oneida Barrios, Justina Barrios, Elbira Barrios and Luis Alberto Barrios– without a warrant.

Days later, Benito Antonio Barrios' son - Jorge Antonio Barrios - was detained by a group of policemen. His uncle Narciso Barrios and his cousin Néstor Caudí Barrios followed the officers. Jorge Antonio was released, but they shot **Narciso Barrios** (aged 24) several times in the head.

In 2004, Néstor Caudí Barrios was threatened with arrest reportedly for theft by the official in charge of the investigation into the killing of his uncle and **Luis Alberto Barrios** was gunned down. The following year, **Rigoberto Barrios** (aged 16) was shot by two armed individuals and several members of the family started to flee the area due to fear for their safety.

Other members of the Barrios family who were killed include **Oscar José Barrios** (aged 22) in 2009, **Wilmer José Flores Barrios** (aged 19) in 2010, **Juan José Barrios** (aged 28) in 2011, **Víctor Tomás Barrios** (aged 16) in 2012 and **Jorge Antonio Barrios** (aged 24) on 15 December 2012. Néstor Caudí Barrios survived a shooting in 2011, but was left with permanent injuries.

Amnesty International is unaware of any significant progress in the investigations into these murders, nor of investigations into complaints made by the family regarding death threats and intimidation from state police officers.

The case was submitted to the Inter-American Human Rights system in 2004. That year, the Inter-American Commission issued the first protection measures order, followed by other protection measures issued by the Inter-American Court. The Court ruled in November 2011 that the Venezuelan State had violated the rights to life, physical integrity and freedom of several members of the Barrios family and ruled that the state had to provide effective protection measures for the family and carry out thorough and impartial investigations and bring those responsible to justice.

Name: Roni Barrios, Benito Barrios, Narciso Barrios, Luis Alberto Barrios, Rigoberto Barrios, Oscar Barrios, Wilmer José Barrios, Juan José Barrios, Víctor Tomás Barrios, Jorge Antonio Barrios and Eloisa Barrios

Gender m/f: The murdered victims are all male; Elouisa Barrios, Roni Barrios' aunt, is female

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