

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PUBLIC STATEMENT

4 February 2011
AI Index: AMR 53/003/2011

Venezuela: Amnesty International welcomes the granting of house arrest to Judge Afiuni

Amnesty International welcomes the granting of house arrest to Judge Maria Lourdes Afiuni Mora but insists that her detention is arbitrary.

Amnesty International sees the 2 February decision to replace the custody order against her with house arrest as progress. The international human rights organization also welcomed the fact that she had been transferred to an oncology hospital in Caracas where she has reportedly undergone an operation.

Amnesty International repeated its call for the charges to be dropped unless clear evidence is presented against Judge Afiuni who has been detained for over a year without the Attorney-General's Office having so far presented any evidence to substantiate the charges against her. For the international human rights organization, the arrest of Judge Afiuni on 10 December 2009 was a case of undue political interference on the part of the executive.

The day after her arrest, President Hugo Chávez applauded her detention and asked for the maximum 30-year prison term to be imposed.

Judge Afiuni has been charged with "ordinary corruption (*corrupción propia*), abuse of authority, aiding escape and criminal association". She was arrested hours after having ordered the conditional release of banker Eligio Cedeño, a decision which was reportedly within her remit and in line with Venezuelan law which states that nobody shall be held in custody awaiting trial for more than two years.

Judge Afiuni has a number of health problems that require medication and gynaecological and oncological treatment. While held at Los Teques women's prison, she has reportedly been denied appropriate medical attention on more than one occasion.

For further information, see:

Venezuela: International Human Rights Day: One year on from the arbitrary arrest of Judge Afiuni, Amnesty International reiterates its call for her release

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR53/009/2010/en>

Venezuela: Concern for health of detained judge: María Lourdes Afiuni Mora

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR53/001/2011/en>

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