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## **Dominican Republic: The Office of the Ombudsman must be urgently established**

The authorities of the Dominican Republic must urgently appoint an Ombudsman to take responsibility for safeguarding human rights, Amnesty International said in a joint letter sent with 25 local human rights organizations to the President of the country's Chamber of Deputies.

In the letter, the organizations argue that creating the Office of the Ombudsman would facilitate the reporting and investigation of human rights abuses in the country.

“Eleven years have passed since the approval of the law creating the concept of Ombudsman, and the 2010 Constitution also expressly mentioned this institution, so we think that it is high time that someone is appointed to fill this important role,” said Javier Zúñiga, Amnesty International’s special advisor.

The authorities of the Dominican Republic have repeatedly given an undertaking, including to the United Nations, that they would create this post.

In the recitals to national Law 19-01, the Dominican legislators established “that the institution of Protector of Citizens, Public Defender or Ombudsman has become a useful tool with which to defend people’s rights in relation to the State administration or any public service provider.”

“The fact that 25 Dominican organizations have joined forces to demand the appointment of the Ombudsman is an eloquent indication that the Dominican Republic needs an independent institution to safeguard people's constitutional rights and investigate possible violations committed by public officials,” said Javier Zúñiga.

The organizations also state that whoever is appointed as Ombudsman needs to be independent and immune from political pressure, with significant experience and a deep knowledge of the human rights system, a gender awareness and demonstrable commitment to the right of all victims of human rights abuses and violations committed by public officials to file an appeal.

Amnesty International’s Puerto Rico section also today announced that it was launching an international petition via its webpage to gather signatures calling on the authorities of the Dominican Republic to appoint an Ombudsman during the first year in office of the President of the Republic elect, Danilo Medina, who is due to take office on 16th August.

### **Further information**

The letter sent to the President of the Chamber of Deputies was signed by: Ala Dominicana de Protección al Anciano, Amnesty International, Cedail, Centro para la Educación y el Desarrollo (CEDUCA), Centro Bono, Centro de Animación a la Pastoral Haitiana, Centro de Investigación para la acción femenina (CIPAF), Ciudadanos contra la Corrupción, Colectivo Mujer y Salud, Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos, Comité Latinoamericano por la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer

(CLADEM-RD), Fundación Comunicad Esperanza y Justicia Internacional (FUNCEJI), Fundación Étnica Integral (FEI), Instituto Caribeño para el Estado de Derecho (ICED), Instituto Dominicano de Apoyo a la Juventud (INDAJOVEN), Lucha por tus Derechos, Mesa Nacional para las Migraciones y Refugiados de la República Dominicana, Movimiento Socio-Cultural de los Trabajadores Haitianos (MOSCTHA), Movimiento de Mujeres Dominico-Haitianas (MUDHA), Núcleo de Apoyo a la Mujer (NAM), Participación Ciudadana, Pastoral Cristiana por los Derechos Humanos, Profamilia, Servicio Jesuita a Migrantes - República Dominicana (SJM-RD), Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de Prensa (SNTP) and Toy Jarto.

**For a copy of the letter, please see: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR27/010/2012/en>**

**Amnesty International Puerto Rico's petition can be found at:**

**<http://www.change.org/petitions/danilomedina-s%C3%A1nchez-president-of-the-dominican-republic-establish-the-ombudsman-s-office-now>**