

URGENT ACTION

POLICE THREATEN, ASSAULT JOURNALIST

Police officers in the Dominican Republic have attacked and threatened a journalist reporting on a forced eviction they were carrying out in the north of the country.

Journalist **Marcelo Contreras** was filming for a local TV channel on 11 April, as police officers evicted peasants who had settled in the farmland of Los Limones near the northern coastal city of Nagua. The head of the police patrol came to him and threatened him with a pistol, asking him to stop his work. Marcelo Contreras responded by saying it was his constitutional right to document and spread the news of the evictions. The police officer replied: "Don't tell me about the constitution, I am the law, you journalists fuck around a lot, fuck!" (*No me hable de constitución, yo soy la ley, ustedes los periodistas joden mucho, coño*). The officer snatched the journalist's camera and arrested him, handcuffing him to the back of a motorcycle, and took him first to the front of a police station in the municipality of El Factor and later to the front of the university in the city of Nagua.

In Nagua, Marcelo Contreras was later brought to a police station. He was released later that day, after local journalists came and complained about the detention of their colleague. Marcelo Contreras was never charged or brought before a prosecutor (*fiscal*). The head of the police station in Nagua advised him to not talk about what had happened.

The National Union of Press Workers (Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de Prensa) protested and says it has documented other cases of police officers preventing journalists doing their work in Nagua.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to order an immediate and independent investigation into the police detaining, threatening and ill-treating Marcelo Contreras on 11 April, and any other reports of police brutality against journalists;
- Calling on them to ensure all police officers responsible in the event are brought to justice and immediately suspended from duties until the judicial investigation is satisfactorily concluded;
- Urging them to act immediately to ensure that all journalists in the country can safely carry out their work without fear of retaliation or threats.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 30 MAY 2013 TO:

Head of the Police

Mayor General P.N.
Lic. José Armando Polanco Gómez
Palacio de la Policía Nacional
Av. Leopoldo Navarro #402,
Santo Domingo, R.D.
Email: ayudantedeljefe@hotmail.com

Salutation: **Señor Jefe de la Policía Nacional/Dear Chief of Police**

Attorney General

Francisco Domínguez Brito
Palacio de Justicia, Av. Jiménez Moya
esq. Juan Ventura Simón
Santo Domingo,

Dominican Republic
Email: info@pgr.gob.do
Salutation: **Dear Attorney General/
Señor Procurador General de la
República**

And copies to:

Director, National Union of Press
Workers
Olivo de León
Email: sntp_prensa@hotmail.com

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

In 2012, the Dominican National Union of Press Workers (Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de Prensa) reported that scores of journalists and other media workers were harassed or physically attacked. In most cases the perpetrators were not brought to justice.

A high number of forced evictions are carried out all over the country and especially in the National District and in Santo Domingo Province. Most evictions are carried out without due process or consultation with the communities affected. The lack of title deeds and security of tenure, which is estimated to affect more than half the population (75 per cent in Santo Domingo Province), are among the main arguments used by the authorities to justify forced evictions. On several occasions, unlawful use of force by the security forces has been reported during forced evictions, some of it resulting in deaths and injuries from gunshots.

The National Police in the Dominican Republic is responsible for a number of human rights violations, including unlawful killings, torture and other ill-treatment, arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances, which Amnesty International documented in the report *Shut up if you don't want to be killed. Human rights violations by the police in the Dominican Republic* (<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR27/002/2011/en>)

Since the election in May 2012 of President Danilo Medina, the government has begun a new process of reform of the Dominican National Police. In December 2012 during a meeting with Amnesty International delegates, President Medina recognized the need for the reform to tackle the numerous abuses committed every year by the National Police.

In March 2013, Amnesty International and various Dominican human rights organizations took part in a hearing at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in Washington DC, on the right to citizen security and police abuses in the Dominican Republic. During the hearing the IACHR asked the Dominican authorities to open for consultation to Dominican civil society the process of reform in order to ensure that all procedures will be put in place in the future to stop the human rights violations by police in the country.

Name: Marcelo Contreras

Gender m/f: m

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