

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/ Intimidation

29 November 2004

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Father Pedro Ruquoy, (m) human rights defender, aged 52

Father Pedro Ruquoy, a Belgian national who is a permanent resident of the Dominican Republic was attacked on 24 November as he distributed food to a crowd at his home. He was hit by a stone in the middle of his spine and fell unconscious for half an hour, before he was taken to hospital.

The attack is the latest in a series of acts of intimidation against Father Pedro Ruquoy as a result of his work defending the rights of Haitian refugees and workers in the Dominican Republic. In three articles published in the daily newspaper *Diario Diario* on 11, 14 and 17 November, Father Pedro Ruquoy was accused of supporting the trafficking of Haitians and even escorting them into the Dominican Republic in his own van. He was also accused of discriminating against Dominicans in the distribution of international aid in favour of Haitians and “denouncing the alleged bad treatment of illegal migrants in national territory to international organisations which could result in the country being subject to sanctions” (*se va a organismos internacionales a denunciar supuestos maltratos de ilegales en territorio nacional, como resultado de las cuales el país puede ser objeto de sanciones*). A *Diario Diario* reader posted a comment on the newspaper’s website accusing him of being a traitor and Father Pedro Ruquoy is said to be taking legal action against the newspaper and some of those who have defamed his character.

In August 2000, Father Pedro Ruquoy testified to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights regarding the treatment of Haitians in the Dominican Republic. Although he participated only as a witness, Amnesty International believes that he has been subjected to intimidation in part from the misrepresentation of this testimony in the press as an attack against the Dominican government. The Inter-American Court called on the Dominican government to take measures to guarantee his safety. Despite this throughout 2001, Amnesty International received reports of threats and acts of intimidation against Father Pedro Ruquoy. In April 2001, he was apparently threatened at knife point in his home and was not provided with police protection until June 2001.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern at the ongoing campaign of attacks against Father Pedro Ruquoy following his work as a human rights defender;
- referring specifically to the latest attack at his home on 24 November following which he had to be taken to the hospital call on the Attorney General Francisco Domínguez Brito to denounce any threats and attacks against Father Pedro Ruquoy, and to make a clear and unequivocal public statement in favour of Father Ruquoy’s role as a defender of the rights of Haitian refugees and workers in the Dominican Republic;
- calling on Attorney General Francisco Domínguez Brito to grant Father Ruquoy police protection and to guarantee that all necessary steps are taken to ensure his safety.

APPEALS TO:

Sr. Francisco Domínguez Brito
Procurador General de la República
C/Hipólito Herrera Billini Esq. Juan B. Pérez,
Centro de los Heroes, Constanza, Maimón y Estero Hondo
Santo Domingo
Dominican Republic

Fax: +1 809 533 4098

Salutation: Dear Señor Brito/ Estimado Señor Brito

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Dominican Republic accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 10 January 2005