

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PRESS RELEASE

28 September 2010  
AI Index: PRE 01/326/2010

### **Dominican Republic should investigate abduction allegations against anti-kidnap police**

Amnesty International is today urging the authorities in the Dominican Republic to investigate the whereabouts of Juan Almonte Herrera who is believed to have been abducted by anti-kidnapping police officers.

On 28 September 2009, Juan Almonte Herrera, a member of the Dominican Committee of Human Rights, was on his way to the Santo Domingo office where he worked as an accountant, when a group of armed men forced him into a car and drove away. He has not been seen since then.

One year on, Juan's family and lawyers are yet to receive any official communication on the status of the investigation into his disappearance despite fears that he could be being held incommunicado or have been killed.

"The Dominican authorities should investigate this disappearance or reveal Juan's whereabouts if he is being held by the security forces. It is very worrying that one year on after his disappearance they appear to have done very little to discover his fate," said Chiara Ligouri, Researcher for the Caribbean in Amnesty International.

The police had announced on Dominican television that two hours after his detention that Juan was himself being investigated over the alleged kidnapping of a 19-year-old in the eastern town of Nagua, and have since maintained that Juan Almonte remains a fugitive.

At the end of October 2009, two unidentified charred bodies were found in a car in Santo Domingo. Juan's sister identified one as being that of Juan Almonte. However, when DNA tests were carried out they were negative, and the family has questioned how the tests were carried out.

Following their call for an investigation, his relatives and lawyers have reported to have been placed under surveillance by the police.

They told Amnesty International they have been followed in cars and watched from the street in front of their house. Juan's sister has received telephone calls asking her to stop publicising the case. They have reported the incidents of surveillance to the authorities, who offer them protection from the police.

"The Dominican authorities must provide adequate protection to Juan Almonte Herrera's family and lawyers, as a matter of urgency and according to their wishes," says Chiara Ligouri.

Amnesty International said it is concerned by continuous reports of human rights violations by police and security forces in the Dominican Republic.