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OAS: Election of the Secretary General - where are the commitments and proposals?

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In an Open Letter sent today, Amnesty International called on those standing as candidates for the post of Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS) to state their position and make commitments on various issues related to effective observance of human rights.

"Given the standards on fundamental rights which the OAS should meet and which are an essential referent for the countries of the region, there is an alarming absence of sufficiently clear and concrete proposals on human rights issues seriously affecting the Continent," Amnesty International said.

"The candidates need to make public what they think and what action they intend to take to address crucial issues such as impunity and attacks on human rights defenders which, though intolerable, occur in most countries of the continent."

In the letter, Amnesty International seeks information about the past record as well as the current position of each candidate with regard to strengthening the independence of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. The organization also asks the candidates to state whether, when supporting the drafting and enforcement of future treaties of a commercial nature or any other kind, they would take a firm stance against any agreement that might lead to the violation of the economic, social and cultural rights of people and populations in the Americas.

"It is essential that the office of OAS Secretary General is held by a person who is clearly committed to these issues and indeed is capable of turning words into action."

"Only when concrete steps have been taken to bring lasting solutions to human rights problems will the OAS be on its way to building a region where true development is possible," Amnesty International concluded.

General background

The current candidates for the post of Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS) are Luis Ernesto Derbez, Francisco Flores and José Miguel Insulza.

The exact date of the election has so far not been officially announced but it is expected to take place soon.

If you wish to have a copy of the open letter sent to the candidates for Secretary General of the OAS (in Spanish), please see: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ESLIOR620012005>

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