

URGENT ACTION

VENEZUELAN ACTIVIST RECEIVED DEATH THREATS

The safety of Venezuelan human rights defender Humberto Prado Sifontes, director of the Venezuelan Observatory of Prisons (Observatorio Venezolano de Prisiones) and his family are seriously at risk following a campaign of intimidation and death threats against him that began in the wake of violent disturbances at El Rodeo Prison in the state of Miranda on 12 June.

Humberto Prado is a prominent defender of prisoner's human rights who has denounced the appalling conditions in Venezuela's prisons for many years. Threats against him began on 18 June after the Minister of the Interior and Justice, Tareck El Aissami, gave a phone interview with a state TV program reportedly stating that Humberto Prado had blatantly lied about the situation in El Rodeo II prison. A day earlier, some 3500 members of the National Guard had begun operations to control the violent situation in El Rodeo prison, which lasted for several days

Following the statements reportedly made by Tareck El Aissami, a blog revealing Humberto Prado's personal details, including private telephone numbers and his address was published. It ended, "Soon, [we'll publish] information about the family ...so the people can judge whether he deserves the death penalty". On 20 June, the webpage of the state run Radio Nacional de Venezuela said "a ferocious offensive has broken out orchestrated by the Venezuelan Observatory of Prisons, directed by Humberto Prado ... The plan is simple: They are preparing an internal war using prisoners". Similar information was broadcast by the state news agency which added information from an anonymous prisoner. This prisoner reportedly said that "human rights groups identified with the opposition and right wing politicians have taken charge of directing the 'pranes', the inmates who command the mafias in the different prisons around the country, in order to generate chaos and then blame the National Guard for the situation".

On 22 June, a national newspaper published an anonymous article stating the US Department of State had "pushed various organizations on its payroll with people like Humberto Prado heading them...". The text also referred to members of other human rights organizations. On the same day Humberto Prado's wife received an anonymous phone call at their home saying that her husband would be "the next one to fall".

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Express concern for the safety of Humberto Prado and his family;
- Urge the authorities to publicly recognise the legitimate human rights work of the Venezuelan Observatory of Prisons and remind them of their duties to ensure the organization can carry out its work without fear of reprisals as established in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.
- Urge the authorities to provide Humberto Prado and his family with effective protection measures, in strict accordance with their wishes.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 8 AUGUST 2011 TO:

Ministro de Interior y Justicia

Tareck El Aissami

Ministerio del Interior y Justicia

Avenida Urdaneta Esquina de Platanal

Edificio Interior y Justicia Despacho del

Ministro, Piso 3, Caracas, VENEZUELA

Fax: + 58 (0) 212 506 1557

Salutation: Señor Ministro/Dear

Minister

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Nicolás Maduro Moros

Ministerio del Poder Popular para

Relaciones Exteriores

Casa Amarilla

Esquina de Principal

Caracas 1010, VENEZUELA

Fax: +58-(0) 212 833633, 8611336

E-Mail: ministro@mre.gov.ve

Salutation: Señor Ministro/Dear

And copies to:

Foro por la Vida

Centro de Derechos Humanos

Universidad Católica Andrés

RIF-J-00012255-5

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Caracas

VENEZUELA

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**

