

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS ASSAULTED

A group of hooded people hit the front and side windows of the vehicle in which human rights defenders Raquel Sánchez and Oscar Alfredo Ríos Santos from the Venezuelan Penal Forum were traveling. Raquel Sánchez was hit on the head, which caused a severe wound. There are concerns that the attack was an attempt to stop Raquel Sánchez and Oscar Ríos from carrying out their legitimate human rights work.

On the evening of 6 June, 2016, **Raquel Sánchez** and **Oscar Alfredo Ríos Santos** were driving in downtown San Cristobal, Táchira state, southwest of the country, when they observed three hooded people approaching them. The hooded people proceeded to hit the front windshield and front right side window of the car with blunt objects. The same attackers hit Raquel Sánchez on the head. The hit caused a sharp wound on top of her head.

Amnesty International has received information that clearly indicates that both anonymous groups and law enforcement agents have attacked Raquel Sánchez in the past with the objective of persuading her from carrying out her legitimate, legal, and peaceful human rights work.

Amnesty International is concerned that in the context of current human rights crisis in Venezuela and the rise of protests in different regions of the country, people exercising their legitimate right to peacefully protest are being attacked, and unidentified groups are seeking to intimidate and inhibit the lawyers and NGOs that work in defense of detained people.

Please write immediately, in Spanish or your own language:

- Urging the Venezuelan authorities to carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation on the intimidation, assaults, threats and attacks against Raquel Sánchez and Oscar Alfredo Ríos Santos, in order to identify those responsible, bring them before a competent and impartial court and apply sanctions prescribed by law in line with the international standards;
- Calling on them to take all necessary measures, in consultation with Raquel Sánchez and Oscar Alfredo Ríos Santos, to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of the defenders and their families;
- Insisting that they ensure that all human rights defenders in Venezuela, in the development of their legitimate activities in defense of human rights, can operate freely without fear of restrictions or reprisals.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 21 JULY 2016 TO:

Attorney General of the Republic

Dr. Luisa Ortega Díaz
Sede Principal del Ministerio Público,
Esquinas de Misericordia a Pele El Ojo
Avenida México, Caracas, Venezuela
Fax: +58 212 578 3239
Email: ministeriopublico@mp.gob.ve
Salutation: Dr. Attorney General/ Dra. Fiscal

Ombudsman

Tarek William Saab
Av. Urdaneta – Frente El Universal
Centro Financiero Latino, Piso 27
Caracas, Venezuela
Fax: +58 212 507 7025
Email: contacto@defensoria.gob.ve
Salutation: Mr. Ombudsman/ Sr. Defensor

Home Affairs, Peace and Justice Minister

Gustavo González López
Av. Urdaneta, Esquina de Platanal, Edif.
Sede MIJ, Piso 1, Carmelitas, Caracas
Fax: +58 212 506 1557
Email:
despachoministro@mijp.gob.ve
mijcudecon@gmail.com
Salutation: Mr. Minister/ Sr. Ministro

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Raquel Sánchez and Oscar Alfredo Ríos Santos are part of the non-governmental organization Venezuelan Penal Forum, with Raquel Sánchez acting as coordinator in Táchira state, where they work to defend and provide assistance to victims of human rights violations during their trials. Raquel Sánchez is a renowned human rights activist, having excelled at defending students and poor people who have peacefully demonstrated in the border state of Táchira, especially after February 2014, when, massive human rights violations occurred in that state. Because of her work as a human rights defender, Raquel Sánchez has faced harassment by the police, as well as intimidation and anonymous threats since 2014.

On several occasions, high-ranking Venezuelan high authorities have made statements on Venezuelan public television attacking the work of Venezuelan Penal Forum and its managers, especially Alfredo Romero, who have been targeted on several occasions and have been victims of intimidating attacks. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) has therefore requested that the Venezuelan State adopt precautionary measures in his favor in March 2015. Likewise in April 2015, the journalist and contributor to the Venezuelan Penal Form, Horacio Giusti, received two threats and a beating, after carrying out public events of the Penal Forum; the Director of the Penal Forum was similarly attacked. The risk and exposure that human rights defenders in Venezuela face has been denounced before several international human rights protection mechanisms, including the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Special Rapporteur on the work of Human Rights Defenders, the UN Human Rights Committee and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, who condemned the facts.

Name: Raquel Sánchez (f) and Oscar Alfredo Ríos Santos (m)

Gender m/f: both

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