

## **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL EU OFFICE PRESS RELEASE**

### **EU-RIO MEETING: HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN NEED URGENT SUPPORT FROM THE EU**

(EMBARGO: 10.00 Brussels time, Tuesday 25 March)

(Brussels 25 March) Amnesty International has today released a Memorandum to the European Union and EU member states\* (see: [www.amnesty-eu.org](http://www.amnesty-eu.org)) calling for the EU's urgent attention to the plight of human rights defenders, during a series of meetings with Latin American and Caribbean ministers this week.

EU foreign ministers will meet their counterparts from the Rio Group, Mercosur, the Andean Community, Mexico and Chile during two days of talks in Athens (27-28 March).

"Amnesty International has documented more killings of human rights defenders in this region than anywhere else in the world. Systematic repression of human rights activists is widespread including extrajudicial executions, 'disappearances', torture and intimidation, and the governments concerned allow it to continue," said Dick Oosting, Director of Amnesty International's EU Office.

"The difficulties and dangers faced by human rights defenders in Latin America and the Caribbean are so serious that concerted efforts are now required at regional and international level to address the issue," he said.

Amnesty International's memorandum to the EU sets out concrete objectives by which the EU can measure compliance with the human rights commitments and clauses contained in all EU agreements with third countries since 1995.

"The EU has publicly paid tribute to the crucial role played by human rights defenders in this region. During this week's series of meetings with Latin American and Caribbean ministers, the EU should translate this recognition into concrete steps to ensure their protection," said Dick Oosting.

Amnesty International's Memorandum to the EU lists recent developments in:

#### **Guatemala**

Renewed attacks against human rights activists, including several killings, have been recorded in recent months.

#### **Colombia**

The human rights community continues to live under siege, with the situation exacerbated by the adoption of new measures to combat terrorism.

#### **St. Lucia**

A human rights lawyer was recently threatened with rape and execution as a result of her work to expose police brutality.

#### **Brazil**

Human rights activists working to ensure public security policies comply with international standards are vilified by public figures for "defending criminals".

#### **Haiti**

Participants and journalists at an International Women's Day March were harassed and threatened.

#### **Argentina**

Two people were shot dead by police in protests at the continuing economic crisis.

**Mexico**

In some states, authorities continue to use legal means to gag human rights defenders.

\* [Amnesty International Memorandum to the European Union and EU Member States: Addressing dangers and difficulties faced by human rights defenders in Latin American and Caribbean States \(www.amnesty-eu.org\)](http://www.amnesty-eu.org)

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