

URGENT ACTION

FAMILIES EVICTED, THREATENED

Some 72 families were forcibly evicted from a poor neighbourhood in the capital by around 300 police and military personnel on 15 October. Since then they have been living in a camp nearby, where they have been harassed and attacked by the security forces who are guarding the area they were evicted from.

Around 300 police and military personnel entered the neighbourhood of Brisas del Este in the municipality of Santo Domingo Este, in the capital, Santo Domingo, at 8am on 15 October. With them were representatives from the Santo Domingo Este Mayor's office and heavy equipment, including tractors. According to eyewitnesses, upon arrival the police and soldiers started to fire buckshot and teargas into the families' houses. They then entered the houses without judicial order, violently forced out the residents and confiscated their valuables. In a few hours all 72 houses had been destroyed by tractors, without giving residents a chance to collect their possessions.

Since then, the evicted families, some of whom have young children, have set up a small makeshift camp nearby. Their houses have been totally destroyed and a small police unit has been installed to guard the land. Families told Amnesty International delegates that they cannot go in, for fear of being shot by police. Since the eviction the same police officers have regularly fired teargas at the families who are living in the camp. According to residents, at around 10pm on 26 October, police officers fired a teargas canister into the camp for no reason except to intimidate them from returning. The land is privately owned and is part of an area which was declared to be of "public utility" by presidential decree in 2004. However, an announced plan to demarcate the area into protected and residential zones has ever been implemented.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- calling on the authorities to act immediately to ensure the safety of the 72 families who were evicted from Brisas del Este, and to protect them from any intimidation and attack by the security forces;
- urging them to order immediately a full and independent investigation into the way the eviction was carried out and into the harassment suffered by the 72 families since then and bring those responsible to justice;
- calling on them to ensure that no eviction is carried out without due process, adequate notice, consultation and all of those affected having access to adequate alternative accommodation.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 9 DECEMBER 2011 TO:

Mayor of Santo Domingo del Este

Lic. Juan De Los Santos
Ayuntamiento de Santo Domingo del Este
Carretera Mella Km. 7½
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
Fax: + 809 788 6605
Salutation: Dear Mayor/Sr. Alcalde

Attorney General

Radhamés Jiménez Peña
Procurador General de la República
Ave. Jiménez Moya esq. Juan Ventura Simón, Palacio de Justicia, Centro de los Heroes, Constanza, Maimón y Estero Hondo, Dominican Republic
Email: info@procuraduria.gov.do
Salutation: Dear Attorney General
/Estimado Procurador General de la República

And copies to:

Community Residents' Committee
Sra. Margdelyn Florian Vasquez
Presidenta de la Junta de Vecinos
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
Email: assumy@hotmail.com

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

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

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

More than 20 people were injured during the eviction, requiring hospital treatment, and many others suffered the effects of the teargas, including children and pregnant women. The families have not been offered alternative accommodation and are living under threat and harassment.

On 4 May 29 families were forcibly evicted from the same neighbourhood and their houses were destroyed by police and military personnel, once again without a judicial order. The houses were rebuilt, and a deal has been reached with the landowner to buy the land. An appeal for legal protection was also filed and was due to be heard on 20 October. The hearing has now been postponed until 3 November.

There have been over 100 forced evictions so far in 2011 in the Dominican Republic. Most evictions are executed without due process or consultation with the communities affected to make lands available for the construction of infrastructure, tourist estates or industrial complexes. The lack of deeds and security of tenure, which is estimated to affect more than 50% of the population (75% in Santo Domingo Province), are among the main arguments used by the authorities to justify forced evictions.