

URGENT ACTION

PEACEFUL PROTESTORS HARASSED AND ARRESTED

Activists peacefully demonstrating in the Dominican Republic against discrimination suffered by Dominicans of Haitian descent were arbitrarily arrested by the police on 11 March. They are at risk of further harassment.



emonstration for rights of Dominicans of Haitian descent © Private

On 11 March, activists campaigning for the rights of Dominicans of Haitian descent were peacefully demonstrating and carrying out a symbolic fast outside the Dominican Central Electoral Board (*Junta Central Electoral*) in Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic. Their protest was to denounce the discrimination that Dominicans of Haitian descent face, as the Central Electoral Board continues to deny them their identity documents. In the evening, four police vans arrived and without warning, officers started to confiscate activists' belongings and put them in their vehicles. They also arrested the 15 activists who were still protesting. One of the activists was injured when a policeman tear-gassed him while he was lying on the ground, resisting the arrest.

Police officers did not offer any reasons or grounds for the arrest and took the 15 activists to a police station in Las Caobas, a neighbourhood in the west part of Santo Domingo. All of them were released an hour later without charge. The activists have returned to the protest outside the Central Electoral Board to continue the vigil, which is expected to last until 13 March. Amnesty International fears they may suffer further harassment and arbitrary detention.

On 12 March two thematic hearings are being held at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights: one on the right to nationality of the Dominicans of Haitian origin, and one on the right to citizen security and police abuses in the Dominican Republic.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to immediately stop any threatening or intimidating acts against human rights defenders working on behalf of the rights of Dominicans of Haitian descent, and ensure their safety;
- Calling on them to allow the peaceful exercise of the activists' right to demonstration;
- Asking them to immediately and independently investigate the arbitrary detentions and harassment and ensure that those responsible are brought to justice.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 23 APRIL 2013 TO:

President of the Republic
 Danilo Medina
 Palacio Nacional
 Avenida México esquina Doctor Delgado
 Gazcue, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
 Fax: +1 809 682 0827
 Email: prensa2@presidencia.gob.do
Salutation: Señor Presidente/Dear President

Chief of the Police
 Jose Armando Polanco Gómez
 Jefe de la Policía Nacional
 Palacio de la Policía Nacional
 Av. Leopoldo Navarro #402
 Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
 Fax: +1809 685 4510
 Email: ayudantedeljefe@hotmail.com
Salutation: Dear Chief of the Police

And copies to:
Movimiento Reconoci.do
 Email: reconocidord@gmail.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

In March 2007 the Dominican Central Electoral Board issued the Circular 17; this instructed government officials to examine closely any identity documents presented for renewal or registration, on the grounds that such documents had been wrongly issued in the past. In practice, this has been used to systematically deny identity documents to thousands of Dominicans of Haitian descent. As well as depriving them of their right to vote and to education, and preventing them from entering the formal job market, it also puts them at risk of mass expulsion without access to judicial review, when they may also face ill-treatment.

A survey carried out in 2011 by the Jesuit Service for Refugees and Migrants in four rural communities revealed that at least 1,584 people had been denied identity documents by the Dominican Central Electoral Board, mainly on the basis of the Circular 17; 96 per cent had been affected between 2005 and 2011 and the vast majority of cases occurred in 2011. Some 72 per cent of those affected were aged between 15 and 34 years.

In 2012, several courts ordered the Central Electoral Board to issue identity documents to hundreds of Dominicans of Haitian descent who had been denied their right to documents. However, so far the Central Electoral Board had failed to implement the decision of the courts.

In March 2012 during the 104th session of the UN Human Rights Committee, the UN body urged the Dominican Republic to “abstain from applying the 2004 General Migration Act retroactively and maintain Dominican nationality for persons who acquired it at birth”. The Committee furthermore recommended the State access the Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, and to “ensure that all children born within its territory are registered and receive an official birth certificate”.

In July 2012, local human rights organizations reported that people who had brought cases against the Central Electoral Board had been threatened and intimidated when Board personnel visited their communities to question them about the migration status of their parents.

At the beginning of March 2013, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) recommended to the Dominican Republic to remove administrative obstacles for the issuing of identity documents to Dominicans of Haitian descent and ensure that these people were not deprived of the right to nationality, and adopt non-discriminatory policies regarding identification documents.

Name: 15 activists

Gender m/f: both

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