

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Press release

3 April 2012

The Dominican Republic must investigate all forced disappearances

AI Index: PRE01/177/2012

The judgment handed down against the Dominican Republic by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights for the forced disappearance of journalist Narciso González Medina in 1994 should prompt the authorities to investigate all cases of forced disappearance in the country, Amnesty International said today.

The judgment orders the Dominican State to carry on investigating the disappearance of Narciso in order to establish the truth about what happened and punish those responsible.

“A good first step towards achieving justice in the Dominican Republic would be for the judgment handed down by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the case of Narciso González Medina to be effectively implemented and for investigations to be opened into all other cases of disappearance,” Chiara Liguori, Amnesty International researcher on the Caribbean, said.

Narciso González Medina, an activist and critic of the government of Rafael Trujillo (1930-1961), disappeared on 26 May 1994. Before he disappeared, Narciso had denounced the electoral fraud that had allegedly allowed the re-election of Joaquín Balaguer as President.

According to the conclusions reached by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Narciso remained in state custody for several days, where he suffered physical and psychological ill-treatment.

The Court also ordered the payment of compensation and medical and psychological treatment to be provided to any of the victims who request it. It also instructed the state to hold a public event to acknowledge its responsibility for what happened and to take measures that help commemorate Narciso's life and the contribution he made to Dominican culture.

Amnesty International has documented two recent cases of possible forced disappearance in which the victims were last seen in police custody.

Gabriel Sandi Alistar and Juan Almonte Herrera disappeared on 23 July 2009 and 28 September 2009 respectively. Both were suspected of having been involved in two kidnappings.

The National Police deny having detained Juan Almonte Herrera, despite witness statements to the contrary. In the case of Gabriel Sandi Alistar, the police have acknowledged that he was detained but say that he escaped while in custody.

In both cases the authorities have failed to take effective measures to establish the whereabouts of the men who disappeared or possible state liability.