

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/death threats

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Juan Carlos Disla (m)
Members of his family

Killed: Nicolás Disla (m), brother of Juan Carlos Disla

Nicolás Disla was unlawfully killed by police officers on 28 March in the capital, Santo Domingo. Two days later, one of the officers allegedly responsible made an attempt on the life of his brother, Juan Carlos Disla, as he attended Nicolás Disla's funeral. Juan Carlos Disla and other members of his family are in grave danger.

At 1pm on 28 March, Nicolas Disla was walking along a busy street in the Cristo Rey district of Santo Domingo when he was ordered to stop by three police officers in a patrol car. Eyewitnesses claim that although Nicolas Disla, who was unarmed, obeyed the order, one of the officers shot him twice in the legs. The officers then handcuffed him as he lay injured, and drove him away. Members of his family were informed of the incident and hurried to the local hospital, where they found that Nicolas Disla had been admitted, but was pronounced dead on arrival. He had been shot in the stomach as well as in the legs.

A funeral was held for Nicolas Disla on the morning of 30 March at a local cemetery. Two of the police officers who allegedly killed him arrived at the cemetery in the same patrol car they had been driving two days earlier. One of the officers got out and approached Juan Carlos Disla. According to an eyewitness, the officer said "don't move or you'll be next" ("quedate quieto o seras el segundo"). The officer then pointed his gun at Juan Carlos Disla and pulled the trigger, but the weapon jammed. The officer ran off. Other mourners at the funeral chased him, but he escaped. The patrol car drove away.

This incident and the Nicolas Disla's murder have been reported to the police authorities. Amnesty International is unaware if an investigation has been initiated.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

According to the Dominican non-governmental organization, the National Human Rights Commission (Comision Nacional de Derechos Humanos), 500 people in the Dominican Republic were killed by police in 2008, and more than 3,000 have been killed in the last 10 years. According to the police the vast majority of these incidents are the result of "exchanges of gunfire" ("intercambios de disparos") between police and armed criminal suspects. Eyewitness reports frequently contradict such claims, however, and Amnesty International believes that a large proportion of these fatal shootings may be unlawful. It is very rare for a police officer to be found guilty of unlawful killing. As there is no independent body to investigate allegations of abuse by members of the security forces, those responsible are rarely brought to justice.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- calling on the authorities to order an immediate, thorough and independent investigation into the attempted murder of Juan Carlos Disla by a police officer, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- urging the authorities to act immediately to ensure the safety of Juan Carlos Disla and his family, in accordance with their wishes;
- calling on the authorities to immediately, and independently investigate the murder of Nicolás Disla by police officers, publish the results and ensure those responsible are brought to justice;

- calling on the authorities to act urgently to halt unlawful police killings in the Dominican Republic and bring an end to the impunity surrounding them.

APPEALS TO:

Attorney General

Sr. Radhamés Jiménez Peña
Procurador General de la República
Palacio de Justicia, Ave. Jiménez Moya esq. Juan Ventura Simón,
Centro de los Heroes, Constanza, Maimón y Estero Hondo.
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Fax: +1 809 533 4098

Salutation: Estimado Señor Jiménez/Dear Sir

Minister of the Interior

Sr. Franklin Almeyda Rancier
Secretario de Estado del Interior y la Policía
Ave. México, Esq.
Leopoldo Navarro, Edif. Oficinas Gubernamentales,
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Fax: +1 809 685 1194

Salutation: Señor Secretario/Dear Sir

COPIES TO:

Human rights organization

Comision Nacional de Derechos Humanos
Av. Ortega y Gasset 200
Cristo Rey
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Email: cndhrd@hotmail.com (please be aware this email account has limited capacity, and messages may bounce back)

and diplomatic representatives of the Dominican Republic accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 15 May 2009.