

**PUBLIC**

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**Forced eviction**

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

**45 families**

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Scores of police and soldiers forcibly evicted 45 families including minors on 1 December from their homes in Villa Venecia de Pantoja, in Santo Domingo Province. The police and soldiers woke the settlers at around 4am and told them to leave the area immediately. Within two hours, an excavator belonging to an international real estate agency started demolishing the homes and uprooting trees and crops.

These 45 families were the last of a group of 170 families that had been occupying plot No.6 for more than seven years. They say the settlement was established on public land belonging to the Sugar Estate Council (*Consejo Estatal del Azúcar*, CEA). The real estate agency claim to be working for the true owner of the land, who reportedly is one of their shareholders.

The police and soldiers who carried out the eviction were under the command of a military general based in Los Alcarrizos municipality. They did not show the families any legal eviction notice. A local human rights organization contacted by Amnesty International, who assisted the affected families shortly after the eviction, obtained a legal notice of eviction from the officers present. They say the document had clearly been altered with correction fluid. The eviction notice was signed by a government lawyer and was dated March 2007 but had originally been issued for plot No.14 only. According to the families, the same document was used in past evictions in plot No.6: there have been mass evictions in October 2006, and in January and June 2007.

The affected families had most of their possessions destroyed or confiscated during the eviction. They have said that Haitian migrant workers arrested by the police were made to load a truck belonging to the real estate agency with the families' belongings.

None of the families has been provided with alternative housing, compensation for their loss or any assistance from the authorities. Most of them have been living in neighbouring Cristo Redentor cemetery where they lack shelter, food and water and are reportedly being harassed by soldiers still guarding the land.

The authorities have not provided any information to the families, or begun any consultation with them, nor have they proposed any alternative settlement. These actions are obligatory under International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to which the Dominican Republic is a state party.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

On 2 June, more than 70 families were forcibly evicted from plot No.6. Community leader César Ureña was allegedly shot several times by soldiers. According to testimonies gathered by a local human rights organization, he was shot once in the chest and carried away. However, when his body appeared in a morgue, he had nine gunshot wounds. Six other people were shot and wounded, and more than 15 homes were destroyed. The situation apparently escalated as the settlers facing eviction tried to stop the police and soldiers, by throwing stones when they first came into the settlement, firing in the air.

Forced evictions are carried out systematically in the Dominican Republic by the security forces or armed groups claiming to represent landowners. Destruction of property and belongings has been reported in most of the cases of forced evictions while no resettlement has been discussed or planned with the affected

persons. According to UN figures, less than half the families in the Dominican Republic can prove they own their homes. This puts them at risk of forced evictions and other human rights violations.

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

- expressing concern that the families living in plot No.6 in Villa Venecia de Pantoja have suffered repeated forced evictions, and asking the authorities to provide them with emergency relief immediately, including adequate shelter, food, sanitation, clean water and medical assistance;
- reminding the authorities that as a party to the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, they are obliged to consult with the families and explore all alternatives to eviction, including offering secure tenure in alternative adequate housing;
- calling on the authorities to take concrete measures to ensure they receive adequate alternative accommodation and compensation for their destroyed possessions;
- calling on the authorities to end all forced evictions and declare and enforce a moratorium for all mass evictions until legislative and policy measures are in place to ensure that evictions are conducted only in full compliance with international human rights laws and standards, in particular to give residents adequate notice of any eviction and information about how the eviction will be carried out.

**APPEALS TO:**

President of the Republic

S.E. Leonel Fernández Reyna

Palacio Nacional

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

**Fax: +1 809 682 0827**

**Email: correspondencias@presidencia.gov.do**

**Salutation: Su Excelencia Señor Presidente/Your Excellency**

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,

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**Salutation: Señor Secretario/Dear Sir**

**COPIES TO:**

NGO supporting the evicted families

COOPHABITAT

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Villa Olímpica

Santo Domingo Este, Dominican Republic

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and to 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 16 January 2008.