



VENEZUELA: VICTIMS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS DURING PROTESTS DEMAND JUSTICE

GHINA RODRÍGUEZ HARASSED FOR DEMANDING JUSTICE FOR THE KILLING OF HER HUSBAND, GUILLERMO SÁNCHEZ



Guillermo Sánchez died after being shot, reportedly by a group of armed men, in La Isabelica, Valencia, on 12 March 2014. Guillermo Sánchez lived in the road where protests were taking place and had left home that day to go and paint his mother's house. His wife, Ghina Rodríguez, told Amnesty International that eyewitnesses stated that a group of armed men shot and beat him. They then put him on a motorbike and flung him towards state police officers who were stationed near the protests, saying: "**here's another one for you, expect some more**". According to reports, it was the police officers who took Guillermo to the door of a medical centre where staff tried to save his life.

To date, one law enforcement official has reportedly been tried in connection with the death of Guillermo Sánchez on the basis of ballistic evidence linking him to the crime. According to reports, the official alleged that he had lent his gun to another, as yet unidentified, person.

Ghina Rodríguez is a member of the Victims' Anti-repression Front (Frente de Víctimas contra la Represión), an organization set up by relatives and victims of human rights violations committed during the protests between February and July 2014. Members and supporters of the Front have been the targets of threats by unidentified individuals in plainclothes. Vicliz Faudul, a reporter and supporter of the Front, was threatened in June 2014. Ghina told Amnesty International, stones were thrown at the journalist's home together with a leaflet which read: "**We see that you did not heed the first warning... Now you see that we have people infiltrated everywhere and that we are following you everywhere. This is your second warning. You will not get a third. This time it was stones. The next time it will be bullets.**" The threat included a photograph of members of the Front, including Ghina.

When Ghina reported these incidents, the prosecutor ordered that she receive protection measures, which consisted of 24-hour protection by the Valencia municipal police. However, she stated that when she went to the police to ask that the measures be implemented, "**the police officers made fun of us. They made it clear that they were not going to waste their time protecting us and they never implemented the measures**".

Ghina and her two children left Venezuela in July 2014, fearing for their safety. At the time of writing, they were living in Mexico where they had been granted refugee status.

The pro and anti-government protests that took place between February and July 2014 left at least 43 people dead, including Guillermo Sánchez. In addition, more than 800 people were injured. Amnesty International is gravely concerned at the reports and photographic and video evidence received showing violence, including the use of firearms, apparently committed by pro-government armed groups acting with the acquiescence of the security forces.¹ It has repeatedly called on the authorities to carry out a thorough, independent and impartial investigation

¹ For more information on the February to July 2014 events, see the following Amnesty International reports: Venezuela: Human rights at risk amid protests (Index: AMR

into these events. However, at the time of writing, to Amnesty International's knowledge no one belonging to these groups has been detained in connection with human rights abuses committed during the protests.

In addition, Amnesty International has been able to determine that in most cases victims and their relatives have expressed a lack of confidence in their ability to get justice and are afraid of reporting abuses because they fear possible reprisals. Amnesty International's research has also revealed that in a number of cases victims and their families have been subjected to direct pressure and harassment aimed at intimidating them and forcing them to give up their fight for justice and reparation. In those cases where they have been granted protection measures by the authorities, measures in accordance with their wishes have not always been implemented.

ACT NOW!

Write to the Venezuelan authorities, urging them to:

- Carry out a thorough, independent and impartial investigation into the death of Guillermo Sánchez and the alleged involvement in these violent crimes of armed groups acting with the acquiescence of the security forces, and ensure that those responsible are brought to justice.
- Ensure that all threats of violence and other forms of intimidation and harassment of victims or their relatives and lawyers that may be linked to their complaints of human rights violations are thoroughly, independently and impartially investigated.

Please send your appeals to:

Vicepresident of the Republic

Sr. Jorge Arreaza
Vicepresidencia de la República
Esq. Carmelitas, Avenida Urdaneta,
Caracas, Venezuela.
Email: vicepresidencia@venezuela.gov.ve
ciudadano@vicepresidencia.gov.ve
Salutation: Dear Vice-president

Attorney General of the Republic

Dra. Luisa Ortega Díaz
Edificio Sede Principal del Ministerio Público,
Esquinas de Misericordia a Pele El Ojo
Caracas, Venezuela
Email: ministeriopublico@mp.gob.ve
Fax: +58 212 578 3239
Salutation: Dear Attorney General

Minister of the Interior, Justice and Peace

Almirante en Jefa Carmen Teresa Meléndez Rivas
Ministerio del Poder Popular para las
Relaciones Interiores, Justicia y Paz.
Edificio Sede del Ministerio, Avenida México
Caracas, Venezuela
Email: mijcudecon@gmail.com
Fax: +58 212 506-1558
Salutation: Dear Minister

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