



## VENEZUELA: VICTIMS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS DURING PROTESTS DEMAND JUSTICE

### BASSIL DA COSTA FRÍAS – KILLED FOR TAKING PART IN A PROTEST



Twenty-three-year-old Bassil Da Costa Frías died on 12 February 2014 in Caracas after taking part in a demonstration. The day before he left home to join the protest Bassil Da Costa wrote on his Facebook page: *“I am going out to march tomorrow without fear”*.

According to the testimony of one of Bassil Da Costa’s relatives who was also on the 12 February protest, at the end of the demonstration that evening several protesters started shouting and throwing stones at the security forces in protest when one of them was detained. In response, members of the National Intelligence Service (Servicio Bolivariano de Inteligencia Nacional, SEBIN) and armed men in plainclothes started firing at the protesters using rifles and handguns. Bassil Da Costa was shot in the head.

Bassil’s cousin who was with him on the demonstration described what happened to Amnesty International: **“I was running down the street, I crossed on to the other pavement, when I got there I heard someone say: “someone’s been hit, someone’s been hit!” Then I saw it was my cousin. Straight away, I got hold of him, picked him up, but immediately saw that he had been hit in the head because he was bleeding heavily. And I picked him up, shouting: “Let’s get him out of here, let’s get him out of here!” I and some friends carried him, and one of them who was helping to carry him said to me “no, he’s already dead, he’s already dead”. And I said “no, he’s not dead, let’s carry on, let’s get him out of here”... Deep down I knew that my cousin was dead, but I did not want to leave him there. I was hoping that he would live because he was breathing and he was still breathing when we arrived at the hospital.”**

Bassil Da Costa was taken by members of the National Police to a nearby hospital where he died a short while later. To date, eight SEBIN officials have been charged in connection with the death of Bassil; one has been remanded in prison and seven are out on bail.

Basil Da Costa, along with Juan Montoya and Roberto Redman, was among the first casualties of the pro and anti-government protests that took place between February and July 2014.<sup>1</sup> The protests left at least 43 people dead and more than 800 injured. Among the dead and injured were demonstrators

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<sup>1</sup> 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 53/009/2014), available at <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR53/009/2014/en>; and Venezuela: Briefing to the UN Committee Against Torture, 53rd session, November 2014 (Index: AMR 53/020/2014), available at <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR53/020/2014/en>.

and law enforcement officials as well as passers by and local residents who were not involved in the protests.

Amnesty International has documented numerous instances during these protests in which law enforcement officials used excessive force against demonstrators, passers by and people living in the neighbourhoods where protests were taking place.

It has also received information that some protesters also used violence, as well as reports of clashes between demonstrators and the security forces. The organization has also documented attacks on protesters and passers by, carried out by pro-government armed groups sometimes acting with the acquiescence of the security forces.

## TAKE ACTION

Please write to the Venezuelan authorities calling them to:

- Carry out a thorough, independent and impartial investigation into Bassil Da Costa Frías' death and ensure that those responsible are brought to justice.
- Guarantee comprehensive reparations to Bassil Da Costa's relatives.

Please send your appeals to:

### Vice-President of the Republic

Sr. Jorge Arreaza  
Vicepresidencia de la República  
Esq. Carmelitas, Avenida Urdaneta,  
Caracas, Venezuela.  
Correo-e : [vicepresidencia@venezuela.gov.ve](mailto:vicepresidencia@venezuela.gov.ve)  
[ciudadano@vicepresidencia.gov.ve](mailto:ciudadano@vicepresidencia.gov.ve)  
Salutation: Dear Vice-President

### The Attorney General of the Republic

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

### The Minister of Justice, Interior 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  
Correo-e: [mijcudecon@gmail.com](mailto:mijcudecon@gmail.com)  
Fax: +58 212 506-1558  
Salutation: Dear Minister

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