

January 18, 2018

H.E. Mr. Danilo Medina
President of Dominican Republic
Palacio Nacional
Avenida México
Gazcue, Distrito Nacional
Santo Domingo
República Dominicana

Office of the Treasurer

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Your Excellency:

Re: Concerns regarding the murder of Yuniol Ramirez Ferreras

I write on behalf of the Law Society of Ontario* to voice our grave concern over the killing of Yuniol Ramirez Ferreras, a lawyer and professor at Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo.

According to the information received, Yuniol Ramirez Ferreras was last seen on October 11, 2017 at the Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo. His body was then found in a river several days later. The information suggests that his murder might be linked to his activity as a lawyer.

The Law Society is deeply concerned about this situation and urges Your Excellency to comply with the Dominican Republic's obligations under international human rights laws, including the United Nations' *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers*.

Article 16 of the *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers* states:

Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economics or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Article 17 states:

Where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities.

The Law Society urges the Government of the Dominican Republic to:

- a. thoroughly investigate the murder of Yuniol Ramirez Ferreras and bring the perpetrator(s) to justice;
- b. investigate whether the murder was tied to Yuniol Ramirez Ferreras' work as a lawyer;
- c. ensure that all lawyers and judges in Morocco are adequately safeguarded by the authorities such that they are able to carry out their professional duties and activities free from intimidation, hindrance, harassment, improper interference, the threat of criminalization, or other human rights violations; and
- d. ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments.

Yours truly,

Paul Schabas
Treasurer

**The Law Society of Ontario is the governing body for more than 50,000 lawyers and 8,000 paralegals in the province of Ontario, Canada. The Treasurer is the head of the Law Society.*

The mandate of the Law Society is to govern the legal profession in the public interest by upholding the independence, integrity and honour of the legal profession for the purpose of advancing the cause of justice and the rule of law.

cc:

Briunny Garabito Segura, Ambassador of the Dominican Republic to Canada

Shauna Hemingway, Ambassador of Canada to the Dominican Republic

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Alex Neve, Secretary General, Amnesty International Canada

Andrew Anderson, Executive Director, Front Line Defenders

Emma Achili, Head of European Union Office, Front Line Defenders

Kenneth Roth, Executive Director, Human Rights Watch

Farida Deif, Canada Director, Human Rights Watch

Adrie van de Streek, Executive Director, Lawyers for Lawyers

David F. Sutherland, Chair, Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

Hina Jilani, President, Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights
Defenders

Michel Forst, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders,
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Diego García-Sayán, Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and
lawyers, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Marina Brilman, International Human Rights Policy Adviser, The Law
Society of England and Wales