

27 January 2016

Venezuela - Assassination of human rights lawyer Héctor Sánchez Losada

On 22 January 2016, human rights lawyer Mr **Héctor Sánchez Losada** was shot and killed by two unidentified gunmen in the city of Maturín, in the state of Monagas.

Héctor Sánchez Losada was a member of the **Human Rights Commission of the Federal Bar Association in the state of Monagas** (*Comisión de DDHH de la Federación de Colegios de Abogados en el estado Monagas*). The human rights commission was created as part of a project led by the Venezuelan Observatory of Prisons – OVP (*Observatorio Venezolano de Prisiones*) in 20 states of Venezuela, to strengthen and expand the work of the Observatory and to ensure respect for the human rights of detained persons in the states.

On 22 January 2016, at approximately midday, the human rights lawyer was travelling to a meeting with a client on Libertador Avenue when he was attacked by two unidentified gunmen riding a motorcycle, who shot him in the back. The human rights defender was immediately taken to a local hospital, but died of his wounds upon arrival. A direct link between the killing and Héctor Sánchez Losada's work as a human rights lawyer has not as of yet been confirmed.

On the morning of 25 January 2016, a complaint was presented before the Public Ministry by Mr **Humberto Prados**, the director of OVP, requesting that an investigator be appointed to conduct an exhaustive investigation into the killing of Héctor Sánchez Losada, and that the perpetrators be identified and brought to justice.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the killing of Héctor Sánchez Losada, which comes in the context of escalating risks for human rights defenders in Venezuela.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Venezuela to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of the human rights defender Héctor Sánchez Losada, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Publicly condemn the killing of human rights defender Héctor Sánchez Losada;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Venezuela are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.