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Forced Disappearance in the Dominican Republic

Government Impunity in Narciso Gonzalez Case Continues after 19 Years

Inter-American Court Ruling Confirmed by Declassified Documents

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Washington, D.C., May 23, 2013 -- The Dominican Republic failed to thoroughly investigate the May 26, 1994, forced disappearance of celebrated journalist and university professor Narciso (Narcisazo) Gonzalez, according to newly declassified documents posted today by the non-governmental National Security Archive. The evidence further confirms an Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruling from February 2012 that found the government of the Dominican Republic responsible for the forced disappearance of Gonzalez, and the denial of the right to due process to his family members (fair investigation and trial).

Gonzalez was one of the few journalists to directly speak against President Balaguer, in a context where "few persons are willing to engage in personal attacks on the president or other powerful persons for fear of possible retaliation," and was known for "naming powerful persons allegedly involved in corrupt activities," reports a June 10, 1994 U.S. Embassy cable. Several days after publishing an article in the magazine La Muralla, sharply criticizing the May 16, 1994 electoral process, he was detained by government security forces and forcibly disappeared. Two years later, The New York Times reported that the Balaguer government had "shelved" the case after what human rights activists dubbed "brief and perfunctory inquiries." Prosecutors agreed to reopen the case and Gonzalez's family voiced their desire that Balaguer be called to testify.

The newly released State Department cables provide context for the disappearance of Gonzalez and its aftermath, during the spring and summer of 1994, chronicling massive protests and strikes in response to the re-election of Joaquin Balaguer in May of that year, which was widely denounced for irregularities.

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