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**UN Human Rights Council
Sixteenth session, 28 February – 25 March 2011**

**Item 6:
Consideration of UPR reports**

PANAMA

Mr. President,

Amnesty International welcomes the support by Panama of recommendations to ensure a credible and independent investigation into the events of July 2010 in Bocas del Toro and to prosecute those responsible for human rights violations during the national strikes which took place there.¹ Following these events, our organization raised concerns with the authorities that security forces appear to have used excessive force resulting in the deaths of at least three protesters and injuries to hundreds of others, including to their faces and eyes. We note that the Special Commission, subsequently set up by the government, recommended in October last year that those responsible for the violence be brought to justice and that the UN *Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials* be incorporated into national guidelines. We encourage Panama to keep this Council informed of its efforts to implement these recommendations.

Mr. President,

We also welcome Panama's support for the recommendation to ensure that the press is not the target of undue political pressure and to guarantee freedom of expression.² In this regard, we wish to raise concern about the case of Francisco Gómez Nadal and Pilar Chato, who are journalists of Spanish nationality with permanent legal residency in Panama and both active members of the human rights organisation, Human Rights Everywhere, which contributed information for the UPR of Panama.³ On 26 February

¹ A/HRC/16/6, paragraphs 69.17 (Slovakia) and 69.18 (Norway).

² Ibid, paragraph 69.24 (Canada).

³ A/HRC/WG.6/9/PAN/3, note 1, JS3. HREV/Human Rights Everywhere contributed to the UPR process on Panama, as included in the Stakeholder Summary.

2011 they were arrested while covering a protest in Panama City. Two days later they were deported and prohibited from re-entry to Panama.

Their departure was presented as voluntary by the government; however, Amnesty International is concerned that Mr. Gomez and Ms. Chato were presented with the choice of either leaving the country or remaining in detention. ⁴ We urge the government to reconsider their expulsion from Panama and to guarantee all journalists the right to carry out their work without fear of reprisals.

Thank you, Mr. President.

⁴ República de Panamá, Ministerio de Seguridad Pública, Servicio Nacional de Migración, Resolution 5194, 28 February 2011 in which the Director General of Migration ordered Francisco Gómez Nadal's voluntary return. Resolution 5195 applies to Ms Chato.