



Amnesty
International
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Amnesty International
Community Group 492
5112 88th Street
Mukilteo, WA. 98275
USA

October 19, 2011

Eric Holder, Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

RE: The Case of Jessica Lenahan (Gonzales) v. U.S.

Dear Attorney General Holder,

I join with Amnesty International in urging you to implement the recommendations of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in the case of Jessica Lenahan (Gonzales) v. U.S.

Jessica Lenahan lost her three daughters, ages 7, 8 and 10, in one day. On June 22, 1999, Jessica learned her three daughters were with her estranged husband, against whom she had a court-issued protection order. Yet, on each of the eight times Jessica contacted the Castle Rock, Colorado Police Department, the police response ranged from uncoordinated to belittling. No help was sent to secure her children, and they were later found dead in the truck of her estranged husband.

In Jessica's case, there seemed to be no protocol to guide officers on how to respond to reports of potential protection order violations involving missing children. Despite having a protection order against him, Jessica's estranged husband Simon Gonzales was able to obtain a firearm the night of the murders, in violation of federal law. His little girls were present when he bought the gun.

Last month, the IACHR publicly concluded that the US violated both Jessica's rights to judicial protection and to be free from violence and non-discrimination and her three young daughters' right to life. As this case and the decision illustrate, there is no excuse for failures to promptly and effectively enforce protection orders, especially after repeated pleas to the police.

The US government should do more to address its systematic failure to protect women and children from domestic violence, in line with its national and international human rights obligations. I urge you to meaningfully implement the recommendations of the IACHR decision in Jessica Lenahan (Gonzales) v. U.S.

Meaningfully addressing this critical IACHR decision would be an important step toward remedying the failure to protect Jessica and her three little girls in the first place. The protection of human rights should start at home.

Sincerely,



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Secretary of State Hillary Clinton
United States State Department
2201 C Street, NW
Washington DC 20520

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