



On the front line

Regional Action Network on Human Rights Defenders

*In this issue of **On the Front Line** we are updating members of the Human Rights Defenders Network on the current status of the Project for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in the Americas.*

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We hope that this update and the information published in this newsletter will be useful for your work on human rights defenders; to publicise the Project within your Section or NGO and to inform and encourage the support of other individuals and non governmental organizations, bringing defenders issues to the attention of the press and the diplomatic community in their countries.

If you would like further information on this Special Project and its Network or would like to participate, please contact Ana Quintanilla, Human Rights Defenders Project, Amnesty International, International Secretariat, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 8DJ, United Kingdom (tel.

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The Project

Project to Promote the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in the Americas

A summary

The Americas Regional Program at the International Secretariat of Amnesty International started implementing in May 1997 a two-year special project aimed at improving existing protection techniques and at developing additional techniques and strategies for protecting our local NGO partners. The Project is being funded by the Dutch Section of AI, with additional contributions on specific areas from the Swiss Section and a United Kingdom Lottery Grant.

The impetus for the special project came from the recommendations of the *International Conference on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Latin America and the Caribbean*, which was convened by the IS in May 1996 in Bogotá, Colombia. The three-day conference was attended by AI staff and members, representatives of 12 other international human rights NGOs, legal and academic experts and human rights defenders from 18 countries in the region. The

participants agreed a final declaration and a set of 71 recommendations for a plan of action, focused partly on the protection of defenders in immediate danger, and the role of publicity, political pressure and lobbying in protection work (a report of the conference was published as AI Index: AMR 01/10/96). The recommendations made on these areas formed the basis of this special project.

The Project is helping develop a As well as campaigning to prevent abuses against human rights defenders, work is developed in the context of the regional strategy against impunity, working on defenders who have “disappeared”, been killed etc, e.g., the case of Josué Giraldo, included in the previous issue of *On the front line* (AMR 01/05/97) and in *Colombia: No security for human Rights Defenders* (AMR 23/32/97).

● *The Human Rights Defenders Network* has been created to work specifically on cases involving human rights defenders in the Americas. The Project is developing the Network further within AI, and expanding it to include individual defenders and national and international NGOs. Each AI Section and NGO in the Network has a contact person to coordinate materials on defenders. Work is allocated in different ways depending on the Section’s capacity; some have assigned a Group to work on defenders, others send actions on defenders to all Groups working on the Americas. The Network receives every two months the newsletter *On the front line* (except for February 1998 issue, cancelled due to lack of personnel). This publication gives updates on current and future materials, recommended actions and news on initiatives taken by members of the Network.

The key point of the Defenders

variety of mechanisms in the areas of campaigning, lobbying, linking projects, and practical support. AI’s membership is being mobilised to work on some protection projects, while other actions are being carried out in cooperation with international human rights organizations and with activists in the field. The Project is developing and implementing pilot protection projects in three broad areas: campaigning, lobbying and practical measures.

Campaigning and lobbying

Network is rapid and coordinated action, requested through Urgent Actions and appeals on defenders. If an individual or an NGO has been receiving threats, for instance, the network may be asked to undertake a quick round of embassy visits or delegations to government officials; to generate diplomatic pressure or make IGO interventions; to publicise the case in their local and national media; or to organize representations from specialist groups.

Defenders forced to leave their countries

Although we must take measures which protect defenders and permit them to continue working in their communities, there are cases in which a particular defender has been so decisively targeted that they must be taken out of the country for their own safety. Through its relief work, AI has been doing this with some success for years. However, there are significant problems in attaining visas or access to certain countries for defenders forced to flee, and we lack any kind of integrated program to support these people once they have reached safe haven.

This part of the special project focuses on two areas: Getting defenders out of the country when they are at imminent risk, and establishing flexible programs of short-term support, which will allow defenders in exile an opportunity to continue to work in a related field,

● *AI’s forms of membership action* like Action Files and RANs are being used or modified to suit the needs of defenders at risk and to maintain the principle of ensuring sustained work on individual cases. Such actions may be most useful in protecting those who suffer repeated violations of their freedom of expression and association: long-term harassment, threats of imprisonment, restrictions on movement, arbitrary detention, accusations of false criminal charges, etc.

and to use their skills productively while waiting to return to their country.

● *Getting defenders out of the country:* We are focusing on lobbying selected governments to give special treatment to defenders forced to leave their country: they could be provided with short-term emergency visas, for instance. Although defenders can ask for political asylum in another country, the great majority of those forced to flee do not wish to become permanent refugees. Governments who are not willing to offer permanent political asylum may be happier to provide short-term sanctuary.

● *Establishing flexible programs of short-term support:* The project is also trying to set up pilot “internships” at local human rights organisations in safer countries, or at AI Sections in the region. This offers developing NGOs a chance to take advantage of the expertise of defenders in exile, while giving the defenders meaningful and practical work and a means of supporting their families. AI Sections and members are also asked to organize short-term accommodation for newly-arrived defenders and to provide orientation assistance when needed. We are also examining the possibility of establishing similar programs for defenders forced to relocate internally, and some funds are being

used to contribute to their basic needs.

Accompaniment

Although regularly acknowledged to be the most effective form of immediate protection, accompaniment is not easy to provide. Those involved must be well-trained and experienced -- otherwise they will put themselves and the people they are meant to be protecting in even more danger.

- To use AI's membership resources to provide support to the international organisations that already do accompaniments, such as Peace Brigades International, which is now working in Guatemala and Colombia. We are also trying to identify other accompaniment organizations with whom we can carry out similar activities.

At the same time, as part of our

Dr. Eduardo Umaña Mendoza
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normal program of work, AI is studying means of "non-physical" accompaniment through providing defenders at risk with a letter or statement of support from AI or governmental or professional organizations, or through the use of paid advertisements in the local and national media -- if possible, signed by a panel of celebrities such as Nobel Prize winners -- which would explain and endorse the work of human rights defenders.

The Project Team

The Project is staffed by two people at the International Secretariat: a Coordinator and a Campaigner. The Coordinator's post, vacant since mid-December is currently being recruited. While some areas of the Project will be developed as soon as there is a full team, the Campaigner has been working closely with teams in the Americas Region and others in the IS and as a result, a number of documents and actions have been produced and sent to the Network in

The project is proposing to facilitate accompaniment by two means:

- To help organize a regular presence of international NGOs and sometimes private citizens with besieged NGOs -- a kind of permanent presence, even if this is accomplished through a rota of high level and/or high publicity visits. This requires coordination and cooperation with other international recent months (see below).

How to participate in the Project

All AI Sections are being encouraged to participate in this special project.

If you would like further information on how to become involved in the special project on the protection of human rights defenders or the Network, please contact Ana Quintanilla, Human Rights Defenders Project, Americas Regional Program, IS (aquintan@amnesty.org).

and national NGOs. Sections are also asked to help research and maintain an emergency list of individuals willing and able to carry out such visits (or to assist with forms of "non-physical accompaniment"). These may include members of embassy staff in certain countries, visiting academics or journalists, or "celebrities" -- such as sports figures, actors and actresses, or well-known writers.

located in his apartment in the Nicolás de Federmán district of Bogotá and killed him with several gunshots to the head.

Dr. Umaña Mendoza had helped to found a number of Colombia's

COLOMBIA

Killing of Dr. Umaña Mendoza -- Colombian Government should take decisive action to end attacks on human rights defenders

On 18 April Dr. Eduardo Umaña Mendoza, one of Colombia's most prominent human rights lawyers and activists, was killed in his office in the capital, Bogota. In the wake of his death, AI called on the Colombian Government to finally accept that there is a clear pattern of attacks against human rights defenders in the country, and effectively tackle this problem once and for all.

According to reports three people, two men and a woman, who identified themselves as journalists entered Dr. Eduardo Umaña's office,

national non-governmental human rights organizations including *Corporación Colectivo de Abogados "José Alvear Restrepo"*, "José Alvear Restrepo" Lawyer's Collective, Sembrar and Minga. He was also an active member of the *Fundación Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos*, Committee of Solidarity with Political Prisoners. As a human rights lawyer Dr. Umaña

His human rights work resulted in his being subjected to numerous death threats and several attempts against his life. His killing comes at a time when Amnesty International has been increasingly concerned for the safety of human rights defenders in Colombia, who have in recent years faced increasing harassment and intimidation, followed, as in this case, by their eventual killing.

President Ernesto Samper Pizano has made repeated commitments to protect the lives and integrity of human rights workers. AI has reiterated its call upon his government to finally stand by these commitments, and ensure that human rights workers can carry out their lawful activities without fear for their own lives or those of their families.

Almost a year ago human rights defenders presented the Colombian Government with a series of proposals to help guarantee their safety. The document, dated 16 June 1997, calls on the government to show the political will to guarantee defenders' safety by reacting against intimidatory public statements and accusations made against human rights defenders by senior military commanders and by dismantling paramilitary groups. The NGOs make clear in the document that a first step to preventing attacks against human rights defenders is to ensure that those responsible for human rights violations against human rights defenders be brought to justice. The document underlines

Mendoza represented numerous political prisoners and trade unionists accused under anti-terrorist legislation and sought justice in many high-profile cases of human rights violations perpetrated by members of the security forces. He played a prominent role as a lawyer for the relatives of the "disappeared".

that cases of human rights violations against human rights defenders in which members of the security forces are involved should not be handled by military courts which have guaranteed the almost complete impunity of members of the security forces in cases of human rights violations. The document also contains proposals of measures the government can take to ensure the safety of human rights defenders under threat.

If the Colombian Government had taken such decisive action Dr. Umaña Mendoza and other human rights workers might still be alive.

More recently, the 54th session of the United Nations Commission for Human Rights urged the Colombian Government to give special importance to the safety of human rights workers. The session called on the Colombian Government to implement the recommendations contained in the recent *Report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights* (E/CN.4/1998/16, 9 March 1998), which urges the proper recognition of the right of human rights advocates to conduct their activities without fear for their lives. The High Commissioner acknowledges the steps taken by the Colombian Government to overcome the dramatic situation facing human rights activists, but states that "the conditions in which activists are working ... demonstrate that the Government's efforts to protect them have proved insufficient".

Dr. Umaña Mendoza vigorously condemned the responsibility of the security forces in human rights violations and the virtually total level of impunity which benefits those responsible for human rights violations. He confronted the Military Justice System as a mechanism of impunity.

Following the killing of Dr. Eduardo Umaña Mendoza, the Colombian Government met with representatives of human rights NGOs on 23 April 1998, who reiterated proposals which they had made in the document submitted to the government in 1997, including the revision of the contents of intelligence files and the immediate dismissal from service of all members of the armed and security forces who are responsible for human rights violations. Following the meeting the government announced that the *Procuraduría General de la Nación*, Office of the Procurator General, would be assigned the task of revising intelligence services files. Furthermore the government committed itself to providing more funds to the Ministry of the Interior for its special program for human rights defenders. It has also been announced that defenders will be able to secure the services of bodyguards who do not belong to the security services but whom they nominate themselves. The government also announced that it would ensure the strict application of Presidential Directive No. 011, issued in the aftermath of the killing of Elsa Alvarado and Mario Calderón in May 1997, ordering members of the high command of the armed forces and other authorities to refrain from making statements which question the legitimacy of human rights organizations or which are of a threatening nature.

The government's latest

commitments are to be welcomed but it is of deep concern that progress on securing adequate protection for human rights defenders only happens when another human rights defender has been killed.

◆ You should refer to the recent killing of Dr. Eduardo Umaña Mendoza (see also UA 122, AMR 23/22/98, and News Service 67/98, 20 April 1998). Express concern that this killing occurred only days after the UN Commission Chair's Declaration and that as such the international community should take a decisive stance and condemn the killing, urge the Colombian authorities to fully investigate this crime and bring those responsible to justice. The Colombian authorities have announced the creation of a special investigative body made up of members of the *Fiscalía General de la Nación*, Office of the Attorney General, *Cuerpo Técnico de Investigaciones* (CTI) Technical Investigations Unit of the Judicial Police, and the *Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad* (DAS), Civilian Security Department, to conduct the investigation into the killing. Though this announcement is to be welcomed, the Colombian authorities have in the past made similar promises to ensure that investigations into previous killings of human rights defenders are advanced. In spite of these promises, those responsible for the killings have still to be brought to justice.

Some advances have been made in the case of the killings of CINEP workers, Mario Calderón and Elsa Alvarado, in May 1997. Five people have been arrested on suspicion of carrying out the killings, yet those suspected of planning the crime have to date not been identified or arrested. That there has been some advances in this case is explained not only by the efforts made by the Human Rights Unit of the *Fiscalía General* but to a great extent by the fact that there has been strong

Recommended Actions

In contacts with your own

international condemnation of these killings. These limited advances are unfortunately an exception compared to the vast majority of cases of human rights violations against human rights activists which remain in complete impunity.

◆ You should express the importance that the international community closely monitor the efforts of the Colombian Government to ensure that investigations into the killing of Dr Eduardo Umaña Mendoza are advanced and that those responsible are brought to justice.

◆ Almost a year ago AI circulated to governments a copy of the letter dated 16 June 1997 which had been presented by Colombian NGOs to the Colombian Government. (This letter was attached to internal document AMR 23/56/97.) Ensure that your government has received it;

- ask your own government what consideration it has given to the human rights NGOs' proposals;

- underline that these proposals (to ensure that cases of human rights violations are separated from military courts; that effective measures be taken to dismantle paramilitary groups and that effective measures be taken to guarantee the safety of human rights defenders) coincide with recommendations made by the Chairs of the 52nd, 53rd sessions and 54th of the UN Commission on Human Rights and the *Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights* and those made by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) of the Organization of American States (OAS) in its 1996 Annual Report

government and political representatives (for AI members in the Network, please liaise with NARAN/Colombia Country Coordinators):

recommendations and so it would be hoped that your government should take a firm stance in backing such proposals;

- underline that the Colombian President has not so far agreed to use his constitutional authority to implement one of the NGOs most important proposals: to dismiss immediately from service all members of the armed and security forces who are responsible for human rights violations;

- acknowledge that recently the Colombian Government has made statements in support of separating serious human rights violations cases from military courts, underline that close international monitoring is required to ensure that the government maintain a strong position on this issue and that such a reform is actually implemented;

- whilst welcoming the Presidential Directive No. 011 issued in August 1997 and the recent announcements by the Colombian Government including the commitment to ensure the strict application of this directive, ask your government to closely monitor its implementation, expressing concern that this directive in itself has not contributed sufficiently to guaranteeing the security of human rights defenders;

- ask your government whether it has explored means of assisting the Colombian Government in the implementation of the NGOs proposals as requested over the past year. You could urge your own government, in consultation with Colombian human rights NGOs, to advise the Colombian Government on the implementation of the

proposals and/or provide funding for proposals for the protection of human rights defenders, and urge that the position of Colombian human rights NGOs on implementation of appropriate protection mechanisms be taken into

◆ Underline that strong reaction by the international community and close monitoring of the investigations into this killing and of the situation in Colombia would represent an important step in helping to guarantee the safety of human rights workers. Underline to your government that advances in the investigations into these killings would be a sign of governmental political will to confront the almost total impunity which benefits those responsible for human rights violations against human rights defenders. An end to this impunity is an essential step to guarantee increased protection for human rights defenders;

If you are working in an European Union country:

◆ Welcome the statement issued by the EU Embassies in Bogotá on 27 April 1998 and ask your government to urge that the EU to closely monitor investigations into the killing of Dr. Umaña and other human rights defenders and raise the points listed above at the EU level;

If you are working in an Organization of American States (OAS) country:

◆ Ask your government to urge other member states to support an OAS public condemnation of the killing raising the above points;

Media work:

◆ On 18 May The Body Shop launches its Human Rights Defenders Campaign (see below). If your Section is involved in this launch you should endeavour to use this opportunity to raise AI's concerns on Colombia with the media. The leaflets of appeal cases

account;

You should follow up on the recommendations included in the internal document AMR 23/56/97:

◆ Urge your government to publicly condemn the killing of Dr. Eduardo on human rights defenders have been distributed to the Human Rights Defenders Network.

◆ The first anniversary of the killing of CINEP human rights workers Elsa Alvarado and Mario Calderón on 19 May 1997, will be a day of action in Colombia to protest against the human rights situation. It should be useful to inform journalists of this day of action to secure greater media interest.

Other action: If you are working in an EU country:

In 1997 this document was presented by several AI Sections to Ministries of Foreign Affairs and in some cases to Ministries dealing with official development assistance (oda). In 1998 we should ask governments what efforts they have made to provide support to the Colombian authorities for the implementation of these proposals and what efforts they have made to discuss the issue of implementation of these proposals with Colombian human rights NGOs. It may also be possible to approach Development Ministries to ask how they will/can provide support for the implementation of these proposals. Some governments have committed themselves to development policies which promote and further human rights and you may be able to argue that such aid would be in line with your own governments stated developmental aid policies.

Note that on 18 May 1998 there is a meeting of European Union Development Ministers. It may be possible to lobby own governments/directly or through parliamentarians, asking whether EU ministers will discuss support for

Umaña Mendoza and express concern that this killing occurred in the aftermath of the call by the Chair of the UN Commission to guarantee the safety of human rights workers.

Colombian human rights NGOs at this meeting or future meetings. This meeting is taking place on the eve of the first anniversary of the killing of CINEP workers, Mario Calderón and Elsa Alvarado.

Contacts with Parliamentarians/Members of the European Parliament

In consultation with EU Contact persons and Parliamentary Officers, you should urge parliamentarians to raise Parliamentary Questions (PQs) or sponsor parliamentary resolutions expressing parliamentary concern for the killing of Dr. Eduardo Umaña Mendoza and asking your own government how it will monitor investigations into this killing, to urge the Colombian Government to take action to guarantee the safety of human rights defenders and how it will provide support for the implementation of the proposals contained in the NGOs' document.

For more information and recommendations please refer to public document *Colombia: Human Rights Defenders Under Increasing Attack - Human Rights Defenders Network Update* (AMR 23/17/98) that updates AMR 23/32/97, October issue of *On the front line* (AMR 01/04/97) and, for AI members, AMR 23/24/98, AMR 23/56/97 and AMR 23/33/97.

GUATEMALA

Killing of Monsig. Gerardi -- other human rights defenders at risk

The brutal murder of Juan Gerardi

Conadera, Auxiliary Bishop of Guatemala, and the Coordinator of the Human Rights Office of the Archbishopric of Guatemala, *Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala* (ODHAG), in Guatemala City on 26

Juan Gerardi Conadera, Auxiliary Bishop of Guatemala (right) and Rónal Ochaeta, director of Human Rights Office of the Archbishopric of Guatemala

His death came only two days after he had presided over presentation of the report of an inter-diocesan project on Recuperation of the Historical Memory (REMHI). This is a study based on more than 55,000 testimonies concerning the tens of thousands of human rights violations suffered by non-combatant civilians during the civil conflict which ravaged the country for more than three decades. The REMHI report synthesized testimonies of victims and witnesses to these violations collected over a three year period and identified the army as responsible for some 90% of the abuses investigated. It also laid a number of past abuses against civilians at the door of the United National Revolutionary Unity (URNG), the armed opposition movement with whom the government finally signed a peace agreement in December 1996. This provided for the establishment of a Historical Clarification Commission, to which REMHI's findings were to be submitted.

The Guatemalan army has denied involvement in Monsig. Gerardi's murder and the government has promised a full inquiry -- to be undertaken by a joint commission made up of government officials and representatives of the Archbishopric. The timing of his death, however, so soon after the REMHI report was made public, has led to fears that his

April 1998 threatens the peace process and the work of all human rights defenders in Guatemala.

Bishop Gerardi was battered to death with a piece of paving stone by unknown assailants as he returned to his home in the capital after a dinner with relatives; his face was so murderers may have been acting on behalf of sectors who want to prevent the identification and prosecution of those responsible for abuses perpetrated during Guatemala's dirty war.

Monsig. Gerardi had been a long-term human rights advocate. His commitment was first evidenced during the years he served as Bishop in the Verapaces in the 1960s and 70s, where he witnessed at first hand the suffering of the local indigenous population. He then became Bishop of El Quiché, another heavily indigenous department, and one of the areas hardest hit by the Guatemalan army's counter-insurgency campaign of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

During that period, those in the church like Bishop Gerardi who attempted to denounce the violations, including massive extrajudicial executions of non-combatant civilians by the army, were often subjected to threats and violations. In just one 18 month period in the early 1980s, 13 priests were killed. Bishop Gerardi himself received death threats and escaped an attempted ambush. Such abuses moved Bishop Gerardi and all other church personnel to withdraw from El Quiché entirely for a period during the 1980s. Bishop Gerardi was himself forced into exile for several years when he was forbidden re-entry into Guatemala.

disfigured by the attack that he was only identifiable by his bishop's ring. There was apparently no evidence of robbery.

More recently, Bishop Gerardi had been an important force behind both the REMHI Project and the establishment of ODHAG itself, in 1989.

Recommended Actions

◆ Please write to the Guatemalan government:

- noting that, until clarified, the international community considers that the killing of Bishop Gerardi on 26 April 1998, represents a threat to the historical clarification process in Guatemala and hence to the peace process itself, as well as to the work of all human rights defenders who will feel under threat until this murder is fully investigated and those responsible for both ordering and carrying it out are brought to justice;
- insisting therefore, that a genuine, transparent and public inquiry be immediately initiated into the circumstances of Bishop Gerardi's death and that its findings be made public;

- asking also for immediate and effective guarantees for the security of all those involved in human rights defence and the historical clarification process.

◆ **In contacts with your own government and political representatives:**

- ask your government to express the importance that the international community attaches to a genuine investigation into the killing of Bishop Gerardi; urge your government to closely monitor the efforts of the Guatemalan Government to investigate it and bring those responsible to justice
 - ask your government to urge the Guatemalan authorities to guarantee the security of all human rights defenders and those involved in the historical clarification process.

◆ **For more information and recommendations** please refer to UA 139/98 (AMR 34/16/98); external document *Human Rights Defenders on the Front Line. Central America and Mexico* (AMR 02/01/96) and update (AMR 02/04/96); *Guatemala: State of Impunity* (AMR 34/02/97).

New materials

Argentina

"Occupational Hazards"? Attacks, Threats and Harassment against Journalists (AMR 13/05/98)

The Human Rights Defenders Network will shortly receive this document, to be published by AI in May 1998. It provides information on a number of cases of journalists who have been subjected to attacks and threats during 1997. The information received in several cases indicates the possible involvement of The Human Rights Defenders Network will soon receive copies of

acquiescence of members of the police or the security forces. The document underlines AI's concerns for the safety of members of the media and their families as well as its concern regarding freedom of the press in the country. It provides a number of recommendations to the Argentine authorities, including the completion of the investigation into the killing of press photographer José Luis Cabezas.

The Human Rights Defenders Network is encouraged to participate in the action on this document and to help reach its objectives:

- To demonstrate international support to all members of the Argentine media who have been targeted for attacks, death threats and intimidation;
- to bring to the attention of Argentine authorities the international concern created by the reports of attacks, death threats and intimidation against members of the media;
- to maintain pressure on the Argentine authorities to ensure that thorough and conclusive investigations are undertaken in all those reported cases;
- to publicise and disseminate this document;
- to encourage the public work of those journalists involved in the promotion and protection of human rights;
- to encourage the freedom of the press in Argentina.

Many of the cases included in the document are related to members of the media who have covered the reporting of the killing of José Luis Cabezas and the subsequent investigation. Members of the Human Rights Defenders Network should include those individuals in their action, but focus their activities on the cases of Daniel Stragá, Carlos Alberto López de Belva and Ana

this document, published by Amnesty International at the end of

April who have been threatened for their specific work in the promotion and protection of human rights.

Brazil

Human Rights Defenders: Protecting human rights for everyone (AMR 19/08/98)

This public document published in April 1998 profiles just a few of the many human rights defenders in Brazil whose cases have been taken up by AI over the past five years. Their stories illustrate vividly the range of human rights violations that continue to occur in Brazil: death squad activity, police killings of civilians, torture in police stations, massacres in prisons, murders of land activists and trade unionists by hired gunmen. The report includes recommendations for the Brazilian Government.

The document has been sent to the Human Rights Defenders Network and its members are asked to help reach its objectives:

- To publicise and promote the role of human rights defenders, particularly in Brazil;
- To put pressure on the Brazilian authorities to address the issue of protection of human rights defenders under threat;
- To put pressure on the Brazilian authorities to promote the work of human rights activists in defending the UDHR and other international human rights mechanisms;
- To publicise and disseminate this document.

Honduras

Still waiting for justice (AMR 37/04/98)

April. It includes the case of Miguel Ángel Pavón, member of the

Committee for the Defence of Human Rights in Honduras (CODEH) and Moisés Landaverde, a teacher and trade union official, both killed on January 1988.

AI has received reports that on 20 April, more than ten years after the killing, arrest warrants were issued by the Third Criminal Court in San Pedro Sula against Major Mario Asdrúbal Quiñónez and former sergeant Jaime Rosales. Major Quiñónez was, at the time of the issuing of the arrest warrants, the second in command of the Public Security Force in La Ceiba, Atlántida. According to unconfirmed reports, he may already be under arrest. Jaime Rosales is reportedly living in the United States.

For more information on this and other cases of human rights defenders in Central America and Mexico see also AMR 02/01/96 and AMR 02/04/96.

Mexico

“Disappearances”: a black hole in the protection of human rights
(AMR 41/05/98)

This document, to be published on 7 May 1998, includes information on a number of human rights defenders and it is being distributed to the Human Rights Defenders Network. AI members will also receive recommended actions (AMR 41/13/98).

UDHR Campaign

The Human Rights Defenders Network has now received copies of the *Defend the Defenders* appeal cases featured in the current AI's campaign to mark the 50th anniversary of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. From May 1998 The Body Shop will be

participating in this campaign through its stores around the world featuring the leaflets on human rights defenders and encouraging people to act upon their behalf and to sign the *Get Up Sign Up!* initiative, showing their commitment to the principles contained in the *Declaration*.

AI invites everyone committed to the principles of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* to join this campaign and to work together to ensure that the Declaration is universally recognized and implemented. For more information, please contact AI Section in your country or the Theme Campaign Team at the International Secretariat or visit the UDHR campaign website (www.amnesty.excite.com).

UN Declaration

The 54th Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights (16 March-24 April 1998) took a step forward towards the adoption of a *Declaration on Human Rights Defenders* when it approved the text of the Draft Declaration agreed by the Working Group in March, after 13 years of debates. The Human Rights Defenders Network has received updates on this debate and a copy of the current text, which will now be submitted to the Economic and Social Council for final adoption by the General Assembly by the end of the year.

OAS

The General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) will be meeting in Caracas, Venezuela, during the first week of June. The situation of human rights defenders in the region will form part of an open letter that Amnesty International will be distributing during the meeting. It will be sent to

the Human Rights Defenders Network with some recommended actions.

Network News

The Spanish Section of AI launched at the end of March 1998 a program for the protection and promotion of human rights. As well as taking part in the Human Rights Defenders Network, the program will offer temporary protection in Spain to defenders at risk and will establish links between threatened defenders and public figures in order to publicise the situation and increase protection.

For more information, please contact the Spanish Section (Apdo. 50.318, 28080 Madrid, tel. +34 91 310 1277, fax +34 91 319 5334).

Virtual Network

hndefnet@amnesty.org is being used regularly to e-mail to the Defenders Network materials for information and action, and to distribute some materials produced by other human rights NGOs working on the protection of human rights defenders. A separate electronic address is being used to send you, in English and Spanish, Urgent Actions and appeals on human rights defenders. If you would like to be included in any of these lists, please send an e-mail to aquintan@amnesty.org.

Feedback

In order to develop the Project and evaluate it, we welcome your ideas and any information on your work as well as comments, questions or problems that you may face. We thank you for the feedback already received.

At present, we are specially interested in hearing about the number of Groups or individuals in your Sections and organizations

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taking action on the materials sent regularly by the Project team.