

PUBLIC

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UA 188/04

Fear for safety/death threats

03 June 2004

HONDURAS

**José Idalecio Murillo (m), a leader of the *Coordinadora Regional de Resistencia Popular* (CRRP), Regional Coordination of Popular Resistance
His family
Other members of the CRRP
Members of the *Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Indígenas Populares* (COPINH),
Civic Council of Indigenous and Popular Organizations**

One of the leaders of an umbrella group of Honduran human rights, environmental and other grassroots organizations has received death threats, and gunmen have fired at his house. One of the member organizations has also received death threats. All this is apparently retribution for the group's recent campaign against illegal logging in environmentally protected areas and local government corruption.

José Idalecio Murillo, who works as a teacher, is a leader of the *Coordinadora Regional de Resistencia Popular* (CRRP), Regional Coordination of Popular Resistance, based in the department of Intibucá in south-western Honduras. On 27 May, at about 1am, four men fired several shots at his house. He and seven members of his family were in the house at the time, but none were hurt. The family reported the attack to both the Attorney General's Office (*Fiscalía*) and the *Dirección General de Investigación Criminal* (DGIC), General Directorate of Criminal Investigations. The DGIC have reportedly claimed that spent cartridges submitted by the family are not valid as evidence. Although witnesses to the shooting originally said they could identify the four men, they later stated that they had only been able to recognize the vehicle the men drove, suggesting that they had been intimidated into changing their evidence. Several other CRRP members have reportedly suffered death threats and harassment in the past few weeks.

One of the most prominent organizations in the CRRP, the *Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Indígenas Populares* (COPINH), Civic Council of Indigenous and Popular Organisations, has also experienced death threats and intimidation because of its activities against illegal logging. On the morning of 28 May a 9mm cartridge was found in the doorway of the COPINH offices. A week earlier, on 20 May, a man had gone into the COPINH offices and threatened three members of the organization who were there. The man, reportedly a member of a local family which sells timber to logging companies, asked "What gives you the right to steal my timber?" ("*con qué derecho me robaron mi madera?*"). The night before, COPINH members had stopped logging trucks and confiscated timber which was being transported from Intibucá to the department of La Paz. As the man left, he shouted, "I'm going to get the three of you" ("*a los tres los voy a quebrar*"), and "I'm going to kill the three of you" ("*a los tres los voy a matar*"). The threats were reported to the DGIC, the National Human Rights Commissioner (CONADEH - *Comisionado Nacional de Derechos Humanos*) and the Attorney General's Office, with the latter reportedly not wanting to accept the complaint.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The CRRP signed agreements with the authorities in Intibucá and the national government on 21 May, which included the dismissal of the Departmental Director of Education for corruption and a 40-day logging ban in Intibucá.

The harassment of environmental and grassroots activists, including indigenous people, is part of a pattern of human rights abuses against those involved in defending the environment in Honduras. Illegal logging of the country's forests, and the construction of dams, are causing grave environmental damage. Amnesty International has documented killings of activists, and death threats against others (see UA 144/03, AMR 37/009/2003, 21 May 2003 and follow-up, AMR 37/012/2003, 22 July 2003).

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish, English or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of José Idalecio Murillo and his family, whose house was attacked by gunmen on 27 May 2004, and for the safety of other members of the *Coordinadora Regional de Resistencia Popular*, who have suffered death threats and intimidation;
- calling for an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the attack on José Idalecio Murillo and his family, and into the campaign of harassment and threats against other members of the CRRP, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take action to protect these people in accordance with their own wishes;
- reminding the authorities of the right of human rights defenders to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in Declarations from the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Security

Dr. Oscar Alvarez, Ministro de Seguridad Pública
Ministerio de Seguridad Pública
Edificio Poujol, 4o piso
Col. Palmira (Blvd. Morazán)
Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Telegrams: Ministro de Seguridad, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Fax: +504 220 4479

Salutation: Dear Minister/Señor Ministro

Attorney General

Dr. Ramón Ovidio Navarro Duarte
Fiscal General de la República
Fiscalía General de la República
Colonia Loma del Guijaro
Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Telegram: Fiscal General de la República, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Fax: +504 221 5666

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/ Señor Fiscal General

COPIES TO:

National Commissioner for Human Rights

Comisionado Nacional de los Derechos Humanos
Ramón Custodio López
Avda. La Paz No. 2444
Contiguo a Galerías La Paz
Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Fax: +504 232 6894 (if someone answers ask for the fax: "me da tono de fax, por favor")

Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas (COPINH)

Barrio Lempira,
Intibucá, Honduras

Fax: +504 783 0817 (if someone answers ask for the fax: "me da tono de fax, por favor")

e-mail: copinhonduras@yahoo.es

and to diplomatic representatives of Honduras accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 14 July 2004.