

URGENT ACTION

JOURNALISTS KILLED IN HONDURAS

Journalists in Honduras are at serious risk. Six journalists, all men, have been shot dead in the last eight weeks, and numerous others have received death threats. No one has been held to account and no action taken to support and protect journalists who write or speak out about organized crime, human rights violations or the government.

On 20 April, news presenter **Jorge Alberto Orellana** became the sixth journalist to be killed since 1 March. He was shot as he left television station TVH in the capital, Tegucigalpa, after finishing his show "Live with Georgino". No motive has yet been identified for the killing. All six journalists were shot dead by unknown assailants. Among those killed were radio journalist David Meza Montesinos, and Nahúm Palacios, news director for TV station Channel 5. David Meza Montesinos, killed on 11 March, had been investigating the issue of drug trafficking and had received threats for several weeks. Nahúm Palacios was murdered three days later. He had investigated a land dispute in the Aguán region and had also reported on drug trafficking, as well as being very out-spoken against the *coup d'état* in June 2009. On 24 July 2009, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights had requested that Honduras take steps to protect him, but the authorities took no action.

Amnesty International has received numerous reports of journalists being threatened and intimidated. **Ricardo Oviedo Reyes**, a television journalist and President of the Association of Media workers of Colón (Asociación de Comunicadores de Colón] in northeastern Honduras, reported that on 9 April, shots were fired by a group of people outside the television studio where he was working. On one occasion, two men on a motorbike followed him home from the studio and have been spotted on other occasions circling his home. On 21 April an unidentified man phoned him, saying "You are going to die" (Te vas a morir) before hanging up. On 18 April, broadcaster **Jorge Otts Andersen** was threatened while presenting a news programme. After discussing the story of a young man who was beaten by police officers, he was called on air by a man who said "We are coming to kill you" (Te vamos ir a matar) and hung up. Just one month before this, also during his show, a man called in and said "Your head already has a price on it" (Tu cabeza ya tiene precio). The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has called on Honduras to protect over 100 people whose lives are at risk. Many of these are journalists.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language, calling on the Honduran authorities to:

- publicly condemn killings and intimidation of journalists and make a commitment to protect journalists;
- carry out an urgent, thorough and impartial investigation into the killings of the six journalists, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- act immediately to provide all necessary protection to journalists under threat, in accordance with their wishes;
- to implement the orders for protection from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 07 JUNE 2010 TO:

President

Sr. Porfirio Lobo Sosa
 Presidente de la República
 Casa Presidencial
 Boulevard Juan Pablo Segundo
 Palacio José Cecilio del Valle
 Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Fax: + 504 232 1666
Salutation: Dear President

Attorney General

Sr. Luis Alberto Rubí
 Fiscal General de la República
 Lomas del Guijarro, Avenida República
 Dominicana
 Edificio Lomas Plaza II
 Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Fax: + 504 221 5667
Salutation: Dear Attorney General

And copies to:

NGO

Comité de Familiares de Detenidos
 Desaparecidos en Honduras (COFADEH)
 Barrio La Plazuela, Avenida Cervantes,
 Casa No. 1301
 Apartado Postal 1243
 Tegucigalpa, HONDURAS
Fax: +504 220 5280 (say "tono de fax")

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of Honduras accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 1 March, Joseph Hernandez Ochoa, a 26-year-old student and journalist was shot dead in Tegucigalpa. He was the first victim in the recent spate of killings of journalists. His colleague, journalist Carol Cabrera, was injured in the same attack. On 11 March, radio journalist David Meza Montesinos was killed by unidentified assailants who had followed his car and shot him as he drove home. He had been investigating the issue of drug trafficking and had received threats by phone for several weeks. Three days later, Nahúm Palacios, news director for TV station Channel 5, was murdered while driving through the city of Tocoa, Colón department. He had investigated a land dispute in the Aguán region and had also reported on drug trafficking. On 24 July 2009, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights had requested that Honduras immediately take steps to protect him, but the authorities took no action. Victor Manuel Juárez and Jose Bayardo Mairena both worked for the news programme *Asi es Olancho* (This is Olancho) in Olancho department, eastern Honduras. They were shot from another vehicle on 27 March as they drove along a road in Olancho.

Following the *coup d'etat* on 28 June 2009 there were closures and occupation of media outlets by military personnel, the beating and physical attack of journalists, and journalists, particularly those investigating organised criminal activity, human rights violations or speaking out about the *coup d'etat*, have been subjected to threats and intimidation. Amnesty International documented violations during the *coup d'etat* in a report released on 27 January 2010 titled "Honduras: Recommendations to the new Honduran government following the coup of June 2009" (Index Number: AMR 37/003/2010).

A new government led by Porfirio Lobo took office on 27 January 2010. Now, with six killings of journalists in just two months, the government must take urgent and immediate action to protect journalists receiving threats, prevent further deaths and investigate and bring to justice the culprits of these murders.

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