

PUBLIC

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Further information on EXTRA 159/99 (AMR 29/06/99, 12 November 1999) and follow-up (AMR 29/02/00, 3 February 2000) - Fear for Safety / Death threats

EL SALVADOR William Hernández, director of *Entre Amigos* (Between Friends), a non-governmental organization working with sexual minorities

The police finally offered protection to William Hernández in late February, when appeals on his behalf from the Urgent Action network were at their peak. He has offered his heartfelt thanks to all those who sent appeals, and told a recent Amnesty International delegation: "there is no doubt that without this pressure they would not have given us police protection" ("*es innegable que sin esta presión no nos hubieran dado la seguridad*").

During the meeting, William pulled out the files where he had kept copies of every single Urgent Action appeal: a total of 468 letters and 858 e-mails. When the authorities feigned ignorance of his case, William replied that he had copies of all the letters which had been sent to them.

Embassies also put pressure on the authorities, again as a result of your appeals, writing repeatedly to ask what action they were taking.

While the authorities are starting to investigate some cases involving sexual minorities, impunity and discrimination are still the norm for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in El Salvador.

The NGO that William Hernández leads, *Entre Amigos*, is one of several whose telephones have been tapped, according to an exposé early this year of widespread bugging in El Salvador. In February 2000 *Entre Amigos* reported this to the head of police, followed by an official complaint against the telephone company. An investigation is pending.

William Hernández was recently awarded the Felipa de Souza prize 2000 by the International Lesbian and Gay Human Rights Commission for his significant contribution toward securing the human rights and freedoms of sexual minorities in El Salvador.

No further action is requested from the Urgent Action network at present. Thank you to all those who sent appeals.