

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 37/04/00

UA 127/00

19 May 2000

HONDURAS Julio César Pineda Alvarado, journalist, human rights defender
His wife and children

A gunman has attempted to kill radio journalist Julio César Pineda, an outspoken critic of alleged summary executions by police. He and his family have been followed and threatened. Police have been very reluctant to investigate the attempted murder.

On 26 April, as Julio César Pineda, his wife and their two youngest children got off their motorbike outside their house, a car pulled up in front of them. Two men got out and, without speaking, one of them put a gun to Julio César Pineda Alvarado's head and shot him. The two men, apparently believing they had killed him, escaped in the waiting car. Eyewitnesses say two other men were involved, a driver and a lookout. Although he was wounded, Julio César Pineda Alvarado miraculously escaped with his life thanks to his motorcycle helmet.

Friends and colleagues immediately reported the attack to the *Dirección General de Investigación Criminal* (DGIC), Directorate of Criminal Investigations, and asked for protection for Pineda and his family. The police reportedly failed to investigate the attack or provide protection for the family. Only after pressure from the *Comisionado Nacional de Protección de Derechos Humanos*, National Commissioner for the protection of Human Rights, did the police reportedly start an investigation - 12 days after the crime. The investigation has moved extremely slowly.

For two years Julio César Pineda Alvarado has worked for a radio station known for its stand on human rights and social issues, *Radio El Progreso*, which is run by the Jesuits and supported by the *Comisionado Nacional de Protección de Derechos Humanos*. Julio César Pineda Alvarado has been vocal in denouncing labour rights violations, medical malpractice and apparent police involvement in summary executions of alleged criminals. He was a member of a commission of investigation into summary and arbitrary killings in *El Progreso*.

In recent months he has received an increasing number of anonymous calls to his home, in la Colonia Reparto Lempira, near the city of San Pedro Sula. A car has openly followed him several times on his 30km journey home from the radio station, which is in the city of El Progreso, Yoro department. A state official has reportedly made public statements against him because of his work for *Radio El Progreso*.

The family report that they are still being followed. On 16 May two young men followed Julio César Pineda Alvarado's wife, and then approached and threatened her while she was on a bus.

Julio César Pineda Alvarado has worked on human rights issues since the mid-1980s. In 1993 armed men reportedly broke into his house and attacked his family. They told him not to meddle in things that did not concern him. Those responsible for the attack were never brought to justice.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International continues to receive reports of Honduran human rights defenders and journalists being attacked, threatened and intimidated because of their legitimate activities. The authorities rarely investigate these cases

effectively, thus encouraging those responsible to continue in the knowledge that their impunity is all but guaranteed.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Julio César Pineda Alvarado and his family after the attempt on his life of 26 April and the continuing campaign of threats and intimidation against them;
- calling on the authorities to take all measures deemed appropriate by Julio César Pineda Alvarado and his family to guarantee their safety;
- calling for a prompt and effective investigation into the attempt on Julio César Pineda Alvarado's life and all threats and acts of intimidation against him and his family, so that those responsible are brought to justice;
- asking for the results of the investigation to be made public;
- citing article 72 of the Honduran constitution, which guarantees the right to broadcast opinions freely without restrictions.

APPEALS TO:

President

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 Presidente de la República de Honduras
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Telegrams: Presidente, Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Salutation: Sr. President/Dear President

Minister of Defence and Public Security

Elizabeth Chiuz Sierra
 Ministra de Defensa Nacional y Seguridad Pública
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 Tegucigalpa, HONDURAS
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Salutation: Señora Ministra / Dear Minister

Attorney General

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 Fiscal General de la República
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Salutation: Sr. Fiscal General/Dear Attorney General

National Commission for the Protection of Human Rights

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COPIES TO:

Human rights organizations

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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 30 June 2000.