

PUBLIC

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Further information on UA 89/99 (AMR 37/03/99, 23 April 1999) - Law reform

HONDURAS Office of the National Commissioner for the Protection of Human Rights

On 30 April 1999, the government announced that amendments to the Law of the National Commissioner for the Protection of Human Rights, which would limit both the Office's scope and reduce the Commissioner's period of office, would be withdrawn.

The announcement followed a wave of international protest and condemnation at the implementation of the new law. Human Rights Ombudsmen from a number of countries, including Bolivia, Argentina and Spain, expressed their disapproval at the decision. Likewise, human rights organisations, including Amnesty International, made vociferous protests against it. On 1 April the Netherlands announced a suspension of all aid to Honduras, while Spain threatened to follow suit in reaction to the new amendment.

The present Commissioner, Dr Leo Valladares, has received considerable international recognition for his campaigns against human rights abuses in Honduras. The attempt by Congress to restrict his activities and the speed and intensity of the international response to such a move stands as a testimony to the importance of his work.

The restrictions were reportedly implemented in reaction to Dr Valladares' accusations of government corruption with regard to its management of foreign aid sent to help survivors of hurricane Mitch.

No further action is required. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.