

AI Index: PRE 01/244/2011
10 May 2011

El Salvador urged to protect journalists after death threats

Authorities in El Salvador must take immediate action to protect journalists who fear for their lives after receiving a series of death threats, Amnesty International said today.

From 30 April to 4 May, staff members at Radio Victoria, a community radio station committed to social and human rights reporting in Cabañas region north-east of the capital San Salvador, told Amnesty International they received repeated death threats claiming to come from a “death squad.”

“It’s unacceptable for El Salvador to stand by while members of the media receive threats intended to silence them,” said Guadalupe Marengo, Amnesty International’s Americas Deputy Director.

“The Salvadoran authorities must immediately provide protection to the staff and launch an independent, thorough and impartial investigation into these repeated threats and bring those responsible to justice.”

A letter delivered to Radio Victoria at early on the morning of 30 April threatened the lives of journalists Pablo Ayala and Manuel Navarte if they failed to stop broadcasting and leave the area within three days. The author of the letter claimed to have photographs and video of the two journalists.

On 2 May, Pablo Ayala and Marixela Ramos, a news producer at Radio Victoria, received several text messages threatening them.

Several hours after Radio Victoria staff held a press conference about the intimidation in San Salvador on 4 May, they received additional threatening text messages.

In 2009 the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights called on the authorities to ensure the safety of the staff at Radio Victoria.

Staff at Radio Victoria previously received threats in December 2009, and since then there have been several attacks and death threats against human rights defenders and media workers in Cabañas region.