

PUBLIC

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Threats/intimidation

8 June 2004

HONDURAS

Andrés Pavón Murillo (m), human rights defender

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Andrés Pavón Murillo, president of the *Comité para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos en Honduras* (CODEH), Committee for the Defence of Human Rights in Honduras, has been subject to intimidation, after he accused the Honduran State of violating human rights, negligence and the denial of justice following the death of over 100 gang members in the San Pedro Sula prison on 17 May. Amnesty International is concerned for his safety.

Since 4 May, Andrés Pavón has reportedly received four threatening telephone calls, two on his mobile phone and two on his office phone. The caller threatened that they would "*acabar con los defensores de mareros*" "finish with the defenders of the *mareros* or gang members".

On two different occasions during the last week of May, neighbours saw a car with polarised windows which they did not recognise outside Andrés Pavón's weekend home, located in a small village some 45 minutes from the city of Tegucigalpa. He has also reportedly been verbally attacked on television and radio. It has been reported that on a national radio station, both a member of staff and the general public have allegedly said that he should be shot for defending delinquents. On a national television programme, a suggestion was reportedly made that Andrés Pavón's son or another close family member should be killed in order to see whether he would continue his work. On 29 May, Andrés Pavón requested precautionary measures from the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights.

CODEH is one of the leading independent human rights organizations in Honduras. Since the organization was formed in 1981, its members have been the targets of attacks, death threats and even "disappearances". Andrés Pavón has previously been intimidated as a result of his work. In 1994 he was followed by a gunman after he denounced the disappearance of Orlando Jiménez (see UA 426/94, AMR 37/09/94, 2 December 1994). In December 2003, his house was also broken into and in addition to valuable objects, documents concerning the organisation's work were also taken. The break-in was reportedly not investigated by the authorities.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In recent years the number of *maras*, or gangs, have increased in both Honduras and other Central American countries due to increased poverty, the crisis in the family, unemployment and a lack of opportunities among the poorest sectors of society. Elements of Honduran media have frequently blamed the *maras* for growing public insecurity. The general public often blames a large number of crimes on the gang members, whom they consider to be criminals by nature and exempt from all human rights.

At 1:30 am, on 17 May a fire in one of the cells at San Pedro Sula prison caused the death of 104 inmates. Another 27 suffered first to third degree burns. According to reports young people remained locked in the cell during the fire and were not allowed to escape. All were members of the Salvatrucha *mara* or gang. In April 2003, in El Porvenir prison, in La Ceiba, department of Atlántida, 69 people, most of them members of the *Mara 18*, died during a riot. Dozens of police, army and prison officers accused of being implicated in those deaths remain at liberty and in their posts while the legal process continues.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:**

- expressing concern for the safety of Andrés Pavón Murillo, president of the *Comité para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos en Honduras* (CODEH), Committee for the Defence of Human Rights;

- urging the authorities to carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into reports of intimidation against Andrés Pavón Murillo, to make the results public and bring those responsible to justice.
- calling on the authorities to guarantee the safety, in accordance with their wishes, of Andrés Pavón Murillo and his family;
- reminding the authorities of its obligation to ensure that the media be impartial and not be used as a vehicle to intimidate human rights defenders carrying out their activities;
- urging the authorities to independently and exhaustively investigate the death of over 100 inmates, all members of the Salvatrucha *mara*, in the San Pedro Sula prison on 17 May 2004. Stating that responsibility for action or omission with regard to the events must be determined;
- reminding the authorities of the right of human rights defenders to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in Declarations from the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

**APPEALS TO:**

Minister of Security

Dr. Oscar Alvarez  
 Ministro de Seguridad Pública  
 Ministerio de Seguridad Pública  
 Edificio Poujol, 4o piso  
 Col. Palmira (Blvd. Morazán)  
 Tegucigalpa, Honduras

**Telegram: Ministro de Seguridad Pública, Tegucigalpa, Honduras**

**Fax: +504 220 4479 (if someone answers, ask for the fax: “me da tono de fax, por favor”)**

**Salutation: Dear Minister/Señor Ministro**

Attorney General

Dr. Ramón Ovidio Navarro Duarte  
 Fiscal General de la República  
 Fiscalía General de la República  
 Colonia Loma del Guijaro  
 Tegucigalpa, Honduras

**Telegram: Fiscal General de la República, Tegucigalpa, Honduras**

**Fax: +504 221 5666**

**Salutation: Dear Attorney General/ Señor Fiscal General**

**COPIES TO:**

National Commissioner for Human Rights

Comisionado Nacional de los Derechos Humanos  
 Ramón Custodio López  
 Avda. La Paz No. 2444  
 Contiguo a Galerías La Paz  
 Tegucigalpa, Honduras

**Fax: +504 232 6894 (if someone answers, ask for the fax: “me da tono de fax, por favor”)**

Comité para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos en Honduras (CODEH)

Tegucigalpa, M.D.C., Honduras, C.A., Bo. El Centro, ave. Cristobal Colón, Calle Salvador Corleto, No. 924; aptdo. postal No. 3189.

**Fax: + 504 237 9238 (if someone answers, ask for the fax: “me da tono de fax, por favor”)**

**Email: codeh@optinet.hn**

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 20 July 2004