

PUBLIC

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07 August 2006

UA 211/06 Fear for safety/Death Threats

EL SALVADOR William Hernández (m), Director of the Between Friends Association (*Asociación Entre Amigos*), a non-governmental organization working with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people
Members of *Asociación Entre Amigos*

Members of the Between Friends Association (*Asociación Entre Amigos*), including the organization's director, William Hernández, have received death threats and are apparently under surveillance. This may be an attempt to halt the organization's work on behalf of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in El Salvador.

At about 7.30pm on 1 June, William Hernández was threatened at gunpoint outside the office of the *Asociación Entre Amigos*, in the capital, San Salvador, soon after the police officer assigned to protect him had left him for the day. An unidentified man approached William Hernández from behind and put a gun to his neck, saying, "No voltees a ver. Tenés que dejar de joder en la Asamblea. Deja de hacer babosadas en la calle por que ya sé que estás organizando mierdas para este mes. Ya busqué dentro y no encontré nada y aquí voy a encontrar lo que busco; deja de joder o antes de que te cases te mato" ("Don't turn around. Stop fucking in the Assembly. Stop doing stupid things in the street because I know you are organizing some shit for this month. I already looked inside but didn't find anything. Here I'll find what I'm looking for. Stop fucking or I'll kill you before you get married".) The unidentified man grabbed a briefcase which William Hernández was holding, and ran off.

Two days before this attack took place, the office of the *Asociación Entre Amigos* had been raided. On 30 May, William Hernández and another member of the organization's staff arrived at the office to find that three windows had been broken, their files had been searched, and two threats had been written on pieces of paper and left in the office. One note read "culeros se mueren", ("fags' die"), and the other "esto es su merecido", ("this is what you deserve"). No valuable office equipment was stolen in the raid, but a number of documents were taken, including a hand-written programme of the organization's activities planned for June to celebrate sexual diversity. One of the activities was a demonstration in front of the Legislative Assembly opposing the ratification of a constitutional reform banning the marriage of same-sex couples and the adoption of children by lesbians and gay people.

Since the raid, the *Asociación Entre Amigos* has moved to a new office, but staff believe that they may be under surveillance. A number of unidentified men have been noticed outside the office, apparently keeping watch, for four to five hours each day.

The opposition Christian Democratic Party, (*Partido Demócrata Cristiano, PDC*) and the Catholic Church in El Salvador are campaigning for an amendment to the constitution that would make it illegal for same-sex couples to marry and adopt children. The amendment was approved by the Legislative Assembly in 2005 but now has to be ratified by the new parliament, elected in March. The *Asociación Entre Amigos* has been lobbying members of the legislative assembly and campaigning against this amendment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The *Asociación Entre Amigos* provides sex education to LGBT people, as well as to the wider public. It has also spoken out about human rights violations against LGBT people and the failure of the authorities to investigate such abuses.

LGBT people in El Salvador regularly faces attacks and intimidation. The *Asociación Entre Amigos* has reported seven raids on their offices during the last five years. Although in all cases the incidents have been reported to the authorities, investigations into the incidents have proved superficial, and nobody has been brought to justice. William Hernandez still receives some police protection during his working hours following earlier threats against him (see UA 159/99 (AMR 29/06/99, 12 November 1999, and follow-up).

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

- expressing grave concern for the safety of William Hernández, Director of the *Asociación Entre Amigos*, Between Friends Association, and other members of staff at the organization;
- calling on the authorities to take immediate measures to ensure the safety of the *Asociación Entre Amigos* staff, in accordance with their own wishes, and to provide additional security measures for William Hernández, in accordance with his wishes;
- calling for a thorough, prompt and impartial investigation into the death threats against William Hernandez, to make the results public and to bring those responsible to justice;
- reminding the authorities that the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties recognizes the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders and their right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals;
- urging the authorities to take immediate measures to end the intimidation of LGBT people.

APPEALS TO:

Interior Minister

Ministro de Gobernación
Sr. Rene Figueroa
Centro de Gobierno
San Salvador, El Salvador

Fax: + 503 2281 5959

Email: mariana.orellana@gobernacion.gob.sv

Salutation: Dear Minister/ Estimado Ministro

Attorney General

Fiscal General
Lic. Félix Garrid Safie
Fiscalía General de la República
Colonia Flor Blanca
49 Avenida Sur
Edificio 8-B
San Salvador, El Salvador

Fax: + 503 2249 8613

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/ Estimado Fiscal General

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores
Sr. Francisco Esteban Laínez Rivas
Calle circunvalación 227, Colonia san Benito.
San Salvador, El Salvador

Fax: + 503 2243 9658

Email: flainez@rree.gob.sv

Salutation: Dear Minister/ Estimado Ministro

Director General of the National Civilian Police

Director General de la Policía Nacional Civil
Sr. Rodrigo Ávila
Cuartel Central de la PNC
6ª. Calle Oriente,
entre 8 y 10 Avenida Sur
San Salvador, El Salvador

Fax: + 503 2245 1554

Email: gacosta@pnc.gob.sv

Salutation: Dear Director General/ Estimado Director General

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Procurator's Office

Procuraduría para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos

Dra. Beatriz Alamanni de Carrillo

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San Salvador, El Salvador

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and to diplomatic representatives of El Salvador accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 18 September 2006.