

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 115/94 Death threats / Fear for safety

23 March 1994

HONDURAS Leo VALLADARES LANZA, National Commissioner for the Protection of Human Rights

Berta OLIVA de NATIVÍ, (f), General Coordinator of the Committee of Relatives of the "Disappeared" in Honduras, (COFADEH)

Dina Meetabel MEZA ELVIR, (f), Press officer of COFADEH

and Jorge Alberto SIERRA MONCADA, Treasurer of the National Directorate of the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights in Honduras (CODEH)

Amnesty International is deeply concerned for the safety of those promoting human rights in Honduras after receiving reports that the above named people have been subjected to death threats and other intimidation during March 1994.

The threats follow recent efforts by human rights organizations to press for investigations into past human rights abuses.

According to a public denunciation by COFADEH, Dr Leo Valladares, the government's National Commissioner for the Protection of Human Rights in Honduras (*Comisionado Nacional para la Protección de los Derechos Humanos*) received an anonymous telephone death threat on 1 March. He had already reported being subjected to death threats by unidentified people in late December 1993.

On 2 March the Coordinator of COFADEH, Berta Oliva de Nativí, was making a telephone call when the line was intercepted by a man who identified himself as a "colonel". The caller threatened to "disappear" and kill Berta Oliva and her family. The telephone threats were repeated on several occasions the same day and again on 14 March. A funeral march was also played during the telephone calls.

COFADEH also reported that a man in a vehicle with tinted windows followed Dina Meetabel Meza Elvir between 6 and 15 March as she was travelling to and from her home to visit her son in hospital in Comayaguela, neighbourhood of Tegucigalpa. She has registered the vehicle's number plates with the Transport Police for its identification.

Amnesty International's concern about these threats is heightened by the attack on 4 March in San Pedro Sula on Jorge Alberto Sierra Moncada (see UA 101/94 AMR 37/02/94, 11 March). Although he has filed a complaint before the courts, Amnesty International is not aware of any investigation initiated into the attack.

Those responsible for the death threats have not been identified, but COFADEH believes that the perpetrators may be connected with the intelligence services of the Honduran Armed Forces.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 29 December 1993 Dr Leo Valladares published a preliminary report on the "disappeared" in Honduras between 1980 and 1993. The report, "*Los Hechos Hablan por sí mismos*", ("*The Facts Speak for Themselves*"), states that former and current military and civilian officials were responsible for the "*systematic, clandestine and organized*" disappearance of 184 individuals throughout the 1980s. Among the officials cited in the report for their responsibility are two former presidents and the current head of the armed

forces. COFADEH and CODEH have been pressing for the relevant investigations to take place.

The new government of President Carlos Roberto Reina, which took office on 27 January 1994, has promised to implement the Commissioner's recommendations which include bringing to justice those responsible for the "disappearances".

The new Attorney General has recently pledged to open the appropriate judicial investigations. The report also recommends judicial and military reforms, including restrictions on the powers of the military to investigate abuses by military personnel and the separation of military and police functions.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Leo Valladares, Berta Oliva, Dina Meza following death threats and intimidation against them;
- urging the authorities to take measures to ensure their safety and the safety of all other human rights workers in Honduras;
- asking for assurances that all official complaints regarding death threats and attacks will be given due attention, so that the physical security of every Honduran citizen is guaranteed and the public confidence in the state's institutions is restored;
- asking for assurances that the recommendations of the Commissioner be complied with, especially those related to the bringing to justice of those responsible for human rights violations and the review of intelligence operations within the armed forces.

APPEALS TO

1) President of the Republic

S.E. Carlos Roberto Reina
 Presidente de la República de Honduras
 Casa Presidencial, 6^a Avenida, 1^a Calle
 Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Telegrams: Presidente Reina, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Faxes: +504 37 85 21

Telexes: 1120 MMRR HO/1429 HO

Salutation: Sr. Presidente/Dear Mr. President

2) President of the Supreme Court

Lic. Miguel Ángel Rivera Portillo
 Presidente de la Corte Suprema de Justicia
 Palacio de Justicia, Boulevard José Cecilio del Valle
 Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Telegrams: Presidente Corte Suprema, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Faxes: +504 31 28 66

Salutation: Sr. Presidente de la Corte Supreme/Your Honour

3) Attorney General

Dr. Edmundo Orellana
 Fiscal General
 Congreso Nacional
 Palacio Legislativo, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Faxes: +504 22 62 49

Salutation: Sr. Fiscal General/Dear General Attorney

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:Human Rights Commissioner

Lic. Leo Valladares Lanza

Comisionado Nacional para la Protección de los Derechos Humanos

Barrio La Granja, Calle 29, Casa 228, frente Escuela Club de Leones,

Comayaguela, Honduras

Faxes: +504 33 56 12Human Rights Organization

COFADEH

Berta Oliva de Nativi

Apartado Postal 1243, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Faxes: +504 37 98 00

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 4 May 1994.