

UA 201/99

Fear for

**Renato de Jesús Alvarez, 38, journalist**  
**HONDURAS Cesar Omar Silva Rosales, 29, journalist**

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of the two television journalists named above, who have reportedly faced harassment and intimidation since their critical coverage of the police and military.

Renato Alvarez is news editor for Channel 63 *Televisión Nacional de Ingenieros* (TELENISA), National Engineers' Television. On 30 July 1999, at around 9.30pm, he answered a loud knock at the front door of his house in Tegucigalpa and found two men, one about 18 years old, the other around 35 years old, who told him that his car was on fire. He became suspicious and got his neighbour to come with him, leaving the building by the back entrance. On approaching the car they saw that it was not on fire, and that the two men were sitting in a blue car with no licence plates, blocking the exit from the street. Renato Alvarez did not recognise either the car or the men, but did notice that one had a bag which he believed concealed a gun.

On 31 July 1999, Cesar Omar Silva Rosales, a reporter with TELENISA, noticed that he was being followed home from work by a group of men in a blue 4x4 car, with no number plates. He drove around Tegucigalpa for two and a half hours before he lost them. It is believed they were trying to find out where he lived.

Both Renato Alvarez and Cesar Silva Rosales have been covering issues relating to the military and the police, in an independent and critical manner, for TELENISA. They have both recently been working on issues surrounding the recent unrest within the Honduran military, and Amnesty International fears that this may be the reason that they are being targeted.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Honduran military establishment has been unhappy for some time, especially since a civilian, Edgardo Dumas Rodríguez, was appointed Minister of Defence in September 1998. While the Minister of Defence was away for a few days in July, the Vice-Minister, General Roberto Lazarus Lozano, replaced the spokesman for the Honduran armed forces as well as the head of the Operations and Training department. When the Minister returned, he ordered these changes reversed, but General Lozano and at least three high-ranking military commanders refused to obey the order, reportedly intending to bring down the military leadership.

On 30 July, after several tense hours when it seemed there was about to be a coup, with radio stations broadcasting military music, President Carlos Flores, supporting the Minister of Defence, dismissed four high ranking military officers, including the Vice-minister. In June, President Flores had warned top military personnel not to conspire against the Minister of Defence, and to give up any hopes of seizing power.

According to local NGOs the situation has not been totally defused. In a public statement Ramón Custodio, president of the *Comité para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos en Honduras* (CODEH), Committee for the Defence of Human Rights in Honduras, said "we can not see the crisis as being over". His views have been supported by the members of other Honduran non-governmental organizations.

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

- expressing serious concern for the safety of Renato de Jesús Alvarez and Cesar Omar Silva Rosales and their families as a result of these recent threatening incidents;
- urging the government to take immediate measures to guarantee the safety of Renato de Jesús Alvarez and Cesar Omar Silva Rosales and their families and asking to be kept informed of developments;
- calling for a prompt and thorough investigation into the threats and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- citing article 72 of the Honduran constitution, which guarantees the right to broadcast opinions freely without restrictions.

**APPEALS TO:**

1) President

S. E. Carlos Flores Facussé  
Presidente de la República de Honduras  
Casa Presidencial  
6<sup>a</sup> Avenida, 1<sup>a</sup> Calle  
Tegucigalpa, Honduras  
**Fax: + 504 235 6949**  
**E-mail: law\_bureau@hotmail.com**  
**Telegrams: Presidente, Tegucigalpa, Honduras**  
**Salutation: Sr. President/Dear President**

2) Attorney General

Dr. Roy Edmundo Medina  
Fiscal General de la República  
Fiscalía General, Edificio Poujol  
Contiguo a la Casa de la Enfermera  
Boulevard Morazán atrás de Banpro  
Tegucigalpa, Honduras  
**Fax: + 504 239 4750**  
**Telegrams: Fiscal General, Tegucigalpa, Honduras**  
**Salutation: Sr. Fiscal General/Dear Attorney General**

3) National Commission for the Protection of *Human Rights*

Dr. Leo Valladares Lanza  
Comisionado Nacional de Protección  
de los Derechos Humanos  
Avda. La Paz No. 2444  
Contiguo a Galerías La Paz  
Tegucigalpa, Honduras  
**Fax: + 504 236 7213/221 0536**  
**E-mail: conadeh5@hondutel.hn / info@conadeh.hn**  
**Salutation: Sr. Comisionado/ Dear Commissioner**

**COPIES TO:**

1) Human rights organizations

Comité de Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos  
en Honduras (COFADEH)  
Apartado Postal 1243  
Tegucigalpa, Honduras  
**Tel/Fax: + 504 220 5280 + 504 379800**

CODEH. Apartado Postal 3189  
Tegucigalpa, Honduras  
**Faxes:** + 504 37 9238  
**e-mails:** codeh@ns.hondunet.net

Daily Newspaper  
*Diario La Tribuna*  
Sr. Director  
Apartado 1501  
Tegucigalpa, Honduras  
**Fax: + 504 2343050/ 2331188**  
**E-mail:tribuna@latribuna.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 17 September 1999.