

PUBLIC

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Fear for Safety/Harassment

20 May 2003

HONDURAS

Members of *Centro de Prevención, Tratamiento y Rehabilitación de las Víctimas de la Tortura y sus Familiares* (CPTRT), Centre for Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims and their Relatives - human rights organization

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of staff members from the human rights organization *Centro de Prevención, Tratamiento y Rehabilitación de las Víctimas de la Tortura y sus Familiares* (CPTRT), Centre for Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims and their Relatives following a break-in at their offices.

During the early morning of 12 May, the offices of the CPTRT, which is located in the San Rafael neighbourhood of the capital, Tegucigalpa was broken into. The main entrance to the offices was kicked in and paper and computer files containing confidential information were searched. A pair of shoes was also left on one of the desks, which is generally considered to be the sign of a death threat in Honduras.

Alba Mejía, deputy director of the organization, is convinced that it was not a case of common theft, as all the files had been examined meticulously, but items of office equipment were not taken. She believes that the purpose of the intrusion was to search for confidential information related to the organization's work and that it was also a clear attempt to intimidate the organization's staff.

The CPTRT is supporting Sub-Commissioner María Luisa Borjas, Head of the Internal Affairs Unit of the National Police, who in September 2002 denounced the participation of members of the Ministry of Security and National Police in at least 20 extrajudicial executions of children and youths in Honduras. According to reports, María Luisa Borjas immediately began to receive telephone death threats, her office support staff was reduced, her mail intercepted and, two months later, she was told she had been suspended, allegedly for having failed to present proof of her claims.

The CPTRT is also investigating the killings that took place during a riot at the El Porvenir prison in the department of La Ceiba on 5 April, when 69 inmates were killed, the majority of whom were members of 'maras', youth gangs. It has recently been revealed that the initial official explanation, that the gang members had shot other prisoners and barricaded themselves in cells which then caught fire, was a fabrication. The real culprits were members of the police, prison guards and soldiers as well as prisoners working with them.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International continues to receive reports of Honduran human rights defenders being attacked, threatened and intimidated because of their legitimate activities. The authorities rarely investigate these cases effectively, thus encouraging those responsible to continue in the knowledge that their impunity is all but guaranteed.

Amnesty International has also for many years denounced the execution of children and youths at the hands of State agents or unidentified individuals, under circumstances suggesting a "social cleansing" campaign. Most of the victims come from the most marginalized sectors of society, among them the so called "street children" and gang members. The newly adopted government measures of zero tolerance and the use of the armed forces in law enforcement functions present a danger of contravening individual rights and freedoms set out in Honduran laws and in the international commitments made by Honduras.

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

- expressing concern at the break-in and implicit threats carried out at the offices of the CPTRT in Tegucigalpa;
- calling on the authorities to take immediate steps to guarantee the safety of the organization's members;
- urging an immediate, full and impartial investigation into the break-in and for the results of the investigation to be made public.
- 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 the United Nations Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties, and in the equivalent declaration from 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, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Fax: +504 220 4352

Salutation: Dear Minister/Señor Ministro

Attorney General

Dr. Roy Edmundo Medina

Fiscal General de la República

Fiscalía General de la República

Colonia Loma del Guijaro

Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Telegram: Fiscal General de la Republica, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Fax: +504 221 5666

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/ Señor Fiscal General

Director of the National Police

Sra Coralia Rivera Ramos

Directora General de la Policía Preventiva y Comisionada de Policia

Cuartel General de la Policía Preventiva

Barrio Casamata, Paseo el Picacho

Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Telegram: Directora General de la Policia Preventiva, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Tel/fax: +504 238 1323 (if someone answers ask for the fax: "me da tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Dear Director of the National Police/ Sra. Directora General de la Policía

COPIES TO:

National Commissioner for the Protection of Human Rights

Comisionado Nacional de Protección de los Derechos Humanos

Ramón Custodio López

Avda. La Paz No. 2444

Contiguo a Galerías La Paz

Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Fax: +504 235 35 32 (if someone answers ask for the fax: "me da tono de fax, por favor")

Centre for Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims and their Relatives

Centro de Prevención, Tratamiento y Rehabilitación de las Víctimas de la Tortura y sus Familias_(CPTRT)
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Barrio San Rafael segunda calle N. 1513
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Tegucigalpa MDC, Honduras
Fax: + 504 231 1725

Newspaper

La Tribuna
Colonia Santa Bárbara, carretera al primer Batallón de Infantería
Tegucigalpa MDC, Honduras
Fax: + 504 234 30 50

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 1 July 2003.