

El Salvador: William Hernández (m)

Concern: Intimidation and Death Threats

'The rights of our [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender] community are also human rights' -William Hernández

William Hernández, 35, is the Director of Asociación Entre Amigos (Between Friends Association). He and other members of the organisation have received death threats, which seem to be aimed at stopping the work of the association, which provides sex education to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people and the wider public, and speaks out against human rights violations against LGBT people.

On 1 June 2006, an unknown man approached William Hernández from behind, outside the office of the Between Friends Association, and pressed a gun to his neck, saying (in Spanish): 'Don't turn around. Stop f***ing in the Assembly. Stop doing stupid things in the street because I know you are organising some s*** for this month. I already looked inside but didn't find anything. Here I'll find what I'm looking for. Stop f***ing or I'll kill you before you get married.'

The man grabbed William Hernández' briefcase and ran off. Two days earlier, William Hernández and a colleague arrived at the office to find three windows had been broken and files had been searched. Two written threats were left: 'fags die', and 'this is what you deserve'. No valuable office equipment was stolen, but a number of documents were taken, including a programme of the organisation's planned activities.

Since the raid, the Between Friends Association has moved to a new office, but staff believe 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.

This is not the first time that the Between Friends Association has been targeted. They have reported seven raids on their offices to the authorities in the last five years, but investigations have been superficial and no-one has yet been brought to justice. William Hernández was given some police protection during working hours, after receiving death threats in 1999. He still receives this protection, but it is inadequate. The incident on 1 June occurred shortly after the police officer assigned to protect him left for the day.

Amnesty International believes that William Hernández and other members of the Between Friends Association are at grave risk.

Please write to the authorities:

- Calling on them to ensure that William Hernández, and the staff of the Between Friends Association, be provided with additional security measures, in accordance with their wishes, to ensure their absolute safety.
- Asking that a thorough and impartial investigation into the death threats against William Hernández be conducted immediately with the findings made public and the perpetrators brought to justice.
- Stating that Human Rights Defenders hold a very important role in society and that they should be free to carry out their legitimate work without fear of harassment, intimidation or punishment.
- Calling for the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people to be respected and for appropriate measures to be implemented to put an end to the intimidation and persecution of LGBT people.
- Asking that repressive legislation that discriminates on the grounds of sexual orientation (such as the amendment of the Constitution that would make same-sex marriage impossible), is not ratified by Parliament.

Please send appeals to:

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

