

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

AI Index: AMR 37/015/2004 (Public)
News Service No: 317
9 December 2004

Honduras: The right to freedom of association and LGBT organizations

Discriminating against people because of their sexual orientation or gender identity is a violation of their fundamental human rights. Amnesty International therefore very much welcomed the decision taken by the Honduran state to grant legal recognition to three organizations of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people (LGBT), thereby complying with the international standards governing freedom of association and respect for the work of human rights defenders.

However, certain sections of society, the legislature and others have spoken up, condemning the Interior Ministry's decision and, using subjective and discriminatory arguments against LGBT groups, have been putting pressure to push for the legal recognition to be withdrawn.

Everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association and freedom of expression as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Honduran Constitution. However, those who defend sexual rights are at particular risk of the type of repression and marginalization that is happening in Honduras with the calls for withdrawal of the legal status that was recently awarded.

As Hina Jilani, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, said in her observations on the situation of human rights defenders: "Of special importance will be women's human rights groups and those who are active on issues of sexuality, especially sexual orientation and reproductive rights. These groups are often very vulnerable to prejudice, to marginalization and to public repudiation, not only by State forces but by other social actors." (Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights defenders, E/CN.4/2001/94, paragraph 89 g).

Governments are obliged to respect human rights defenders and the legitimate work they do to protect and promote human rights as established in the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted on 9 December 1998, and the equivalent resolution adopted by the Organization of American States.

Civil organizations also have a duty to respect other organizations which are seeking to carry out activities for the public benefit within the framework of the law and whose fundamental right to freedom of association cannot and should not be restricted in any way.

The Colectivo Violeta (Violeta Collective), Comunidad Gay Sampedrana para la Salud Integral (San Pedro Gay Community for Integral Health) and Kukulcán were granted legal status in accordance with national and international law. Amnesty International hopes that the decision, which was made official by its publication in the Gazette, will be respected.

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44
20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

For latest human rights news view <http://news.amnesty.org>