

PUBLIC

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28 October 2008

UA 301/08 Fear for Safety/Death Threats

HONDURAS **Lorna Redell Jackson García, President of trade union SITRAFL
Juana Leticia Maldonado Gutiérrez, SITRAFL Secretary
The four other members of the SITRAFL Executive Committee**

Lorna Redell Jackson García and Juana Leticia Maldonado Gutiérrez have been shot at and threatened with death, apparently in connection with their work as leaders of the motor vehicle workers' trade union SITRAFL. Other members of the SITRAFL Executive Committee have received threatening phone calls. All of them are in grave danger, and they have gone into hiding.

On 11 September, Lorna Jackson and Juana Maldonado were shopping in the town of El Progreso, in the northern Department of El Yoro. At around 5pm, they noticed two men on a motorcycle following them. When they stopped at a nearby shop to buy a drink, one of the men pulled out a gun, shot at them and rode off. All six of the SITRAFL Executive Committee went into hiding after this, and have only recently been able to tell Amnesty International what happened.

On 21 October, Lorna Jackson received a call to her mobile phone from a man, who said, "Where are you, old woman? Where are you hiding? Even if you go to hell, we'll find you." (*Dónde estás, vieja? Dónde te has metido? Aunque te vayas al infierno te vamos a encontrar.*) She has not reported this to the authorities.

All six of the Executive Committee had begun to receive phone calls and text messages threatening them with death in July 2008. On 18 July, Lorna Jackson and her SITRAFL colleagues had arranged to meet with a local television station, which they believed had been carrying out a smear campaign against SITRAFL. While the SITRAFL members were waiting on the roadside before this meeting, a white pickup truck without number plates drove up to them. Two men armed with pistols got out and asked them if they were "the people from the trade union" (*los del sindicato*), and said they had been hired to kill them but would desist if offered more money. The men then drove away.

SITRAFL was set up in order to combat violations of labour rights in a factory making motor vehicle parts and accessories, AFL Honduras (AFL). AFL recognised the trade union, but SITRAFL claims that AFL management discriminated against it, and sacked all its members in June 2007. Six months later, Lorna Jackson and a number of her colleagues were reinstated by AFL.

On 22 August 2008, AFL closed their operations in Honduras, claiming in a letter to employees that this was a result of falling demand for their products. SITRAFL believe that they are being targeted as a result of their work denouncing violations of labour rights in AFL.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Lorna Redell Jackson García, Juana Leticia Maldonado Gutiérrez and the four other members of the Executive Committee of trade union SITRAFL, who have been forced to go into hiding by attacks and death threats;

- urging the authorities to order immediately a swift, impartial and full investigation into the 11 September attack on Lorna Redell Jackson García and Juana Leticia Maldonado, and the telephone death threats made to all members of the SITRAFL Executive Committee, and bring those responsible to justice;
- reminding the authorities that human rights defenders, including trade union leaders, have the right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Security

Coronel Jorge Alberto Rodas Gamero

Ministro

Ministerio de Seguridad Pública

Cuartel Casa Mata

Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Fax: +504 237 9070

Salutation: Dear Minister/Estimado Sr. Ministro

Attorney General

Licdo. Leonidas Rosa Bautista

Fiscal General del Estado

Ministerio Público, Lomas del Guijarro

Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Fax: +504 221 5667

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Estimado Sr. Fiscal General

COPIES TO:

Local human rights organization

Comité de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos en Honduras (COFADEH)

Barrio La Plazuela, Avenida Cervantes, casa 1301

Tegucigalpa, Honduras

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 9 December 2008.