

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
PRESS RELEASE**

AI Index: PRE 01/256/2009
03 July 2009

Honduras: Intimidation of media workers and protestors rising

Amnesty International denounced an escalation in human rights abuses in Honduras and urged the security forces to respect the rule of law and human rights when the President returns to Honduras at the weekend.

Recent reports suggest that journalists who have published news stories on the crisis or covering the issue of protests and scores of detentions have been intimidated. Prosecutors have also reported threats on account of their attempts to verify human rights abuses during protests.

In another case, six protestors were arrested and conditionally released on charges of rebellion in El Progreso. Amnesty International believes they were peaceful protestors and that the charges against them are simply intended to punish them for protesting.

The organization has also received reports of attacks on national and local radio stations. A grenade was found at the premises of Radio America and at least 15 gunshots were fired on a local radio station, leading to its subsequent closure. Many broadcasters appear to have closed for fear for their safety. Others, such as Canal 36, have been closed by the security forces and members of the military are reported to be patrolling their premises.

Amnesty International called for the authorities to investigate these attacks and ensure the broadcasters are able to operate safely without fear for their safety.

"Restricting freedom of expression will only increase frustration and anger," said Kerrie Howard, Amnesty International Deputy Director for the Americas.

"The military and the police must ensure any use of force is proportionate during law enforcement operations and in accordance with UN standards. People must be allowed to protest peacefully without fear of imprisonment, criminal charges or other reprisals," said Kerrie Howard.

Amnesty International also believes that the presidential decree formalizing a State of Emergency, which includes a curfew and the suspension of some individual guarantees and freedoms, could, if applied unreasonably, open the door to other human rights violations.

According to the Opinion of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, in spite of the exceptional circumstances, the state of Honduras remains under strict obligation to protect the right to life, to physical integrity, not to be subjected to torture or ill-treatment, and to enforce the judicial guarantees essential for the protection of such rights, in particular the right to habeas corpus.

The suspension of some guarantees, in particular the reported restriction to due process rights, could in some

cases amount to violations of regional and international human rights treaties to which Honduras is party. The American Convention on Human Rights has clearly set the rule that no circumstances allow for the derogation of the right to life, physical integrity, liberty of conscience and religion, protection of the family or participation in government and judicial guarantees required for the protection of these rights.