

UA 274/97 Apparent extrajudicial executions / Fear for safety 14 August 1997

HONDURAS	Adán Romero)	members
	Pedro Ramos)	of
	Amadeo Pérez)	<i>Tolupan</i>
	Jose Romero)	indigenous
	Wisla Pérez (f))	group

Other members of indigenous community

On 10 August 1997, Adán Romero and Pedro Ramos, members of the *Tolupan* indigenous group, are reported to have been extrajudicially executed by *terratendientes*, landowners, alleged to have links with local authorities and the military, in Candelaria, Yoro Department. In the same incident, three other *Tolupans*, Amadeo Pérez, Jose Romero and Wisla Pérez, were injured.

The killings follow recent death threats against numerous indigenous leaders. Heavily armed vigilante squads are reported to have been patrolling outside the houses of indigenous leaders and videotaping their movements from behind tinted car windows.

In this context, the killings of 10 August have greatly heightened fears for the immediate safety of other indigenous people, in particular their leadership, who have faced a continuous and systematic campaign of assassination, attacks and threats (see below).

While Amnesty International takes no position in disputes over land and the use or ownership of natural resources, it campaigns against human rights violations within its mandate that occur in such contexts. It is further concerned by the impunity prevailing in the cases of previous human rights violations against indigenous people in Honduras.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 14 May 1997 the *Chortís* (one of the seven ethnic groups living in Honduras) and the government reached an agreement on land disputes and security. The government committed itself to fulfil its side of the agreement within two months. However, by mid-July no progress had been made.

On 28 July, 16 indigenous people, belonging to the *Chortí* and *Lenca* ethnic group, demanded political asylum at the Costa Rican embassy in fear for their lives after a series of killings of indigenous people. Their request was denied.

According to reports at least 25 people, members of different ethnic groups involved in the defence of the rights of their peoples, have been murdered, reportedly extrajudicially executed, in the current decade. To date no one has been brought to justice for these murders, including the following:

Cándido Amador Recinos, General Secretary of the General Council of Assessment for the Development of Indigenous Groups in Honduras, and **Ovidio Pérez**, both active members of the *Chortí*, were killed on 12 April and 27 April 1997 respectively.

Jesús Álvarez Rochez, leader of the *Garifuna* community, adviser of the Committee for the Defence of the Land, was shot on 9 April 1997; he died as a result of his wounds on 11 May.

On 14 May **Jorge Manueles**, a *Lenca* leader of the Council of Civic and Popular Organizations, was shot dead. His killing was related to his activism on behalf of indigenous people demanding their land rights in the community of San Juan Intibuca.

Manvil Pinace (17) was shot dead on 22 April 1997. He was a member of a community organization on the island of Roatan, which was protesting the violent eviction of 12 families from the houses.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Spanish or your own language:

- calling for a prompt, full and independent investigation into the reported extrajudicial execution of Adán Romero and Pedro Ramos and the injuring of three other people on 10 August 1997;
- urging that those responsible be promptly brought to justice;
- calling for immediate and effective measures to ensure the safety of all indigenous people in Honduras;
- requesting the government to comply with the agreements signed at national and international level, mentioning some of them, if possible: International Labour Organization (ILO), Covenant 169, signed in 1994 which specifically call for the respect of indigenous cultures and return of indigenous lands; the May 1997 agreement, as well as others signed in July 1996, 1995 and 1994, between the Government of Honduras and indigenous peoples.

APPEALS TO:

1) President

S.E. Carlos Roberto Reina Idiaquez
 Presidente de la República de Honduras
 Casa Presidencial, 6^a Avenida, 1^a Calle
 Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Telegrams: Presidente, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Fax: + 504 344947

Salutation: Sr. Presidente/Dear President

2) Minister of Foreign Affairs

Sr. Delmar Orbizo
 Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores
 Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
 Edificio Atalaya, Avenida La Paz
 Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Telegrams: Ministro Relaciones Exteriores, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Fax: +504 31-0097

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

1) Ombudsman

Lic. Leo Valladares Lanza
 Comisionado Nacional de Protección de los Derechos Humanos
 Avda. Los Próceres 3623
 Tegucigalpa MDC., Honduras

Fax: +504 36 7213

Email: conadehl@gbm.hn

2) Indigenous organizations**Confederación de Pueblos Autóctonos
de Honduras (CONPAH)**

Apartado 20-585,

M.D.C. Honduras

Fax: +504 25 49 25 (If voice: por favor me puede dar tono de fax)**Email: conpah%conpah@sdnhon.org.hn**

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 30 September 1997.