

PUBLIC

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UA 243/08 Fear for Safety

HONDURAS **Luis Javier Santos (m), Public Prosecutor for Consumer Protection
Members of Luis Javier Santos' family**

Public Prosecutor Luis Javier Santos has been shot four times and is in a critical condition in hospital, following an attack connected to his anti-corruption work. He is receiving some police protection in hospital but this may not be sufficient and his family remains at risk.

At approximately 5pm on 1 September, Luis Santos was driving away from his home in the city of San Pedro Sula, in northwest Honduras. A short distance from his house, an unknown assailant opened fire on the car. Luis Santos was shot in the back, the abdomen and the arm before his attacker walked away from the scene. No attempt was made to rob him or to take anything from his car. Luis Santos is currently in an intensive care unit. He has two soldiers and one police officer stationed outside his hospital room and two intelligence officers monitor the surroundings. However, his relatives have not been consulted about the protection measures and it is unclear whether the officers are properly trained to provide personal protection. Luis Santos' family are also concerned for their own safety but no protection has been provided to them.

In his former position as Regional Coordinator in the Anti-Corruption Section of the Public Prosecutor's Office, Luis Santos had investigated a series of cases of corruption involving municipal government administrations, eight of which had led to officials being taken to court. In one of these cases, on 4 January 2007, the former mayor of San Pedro Sula was found guilty of embezzlement. Local press reported that after hearing the verdict, the former mayor openly threatened to kill Luis Santos.

As a result of the threats which he had received, in August 2007 Luis Santos asked the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to order the Honduran government authorities to ensure his safety. The Honduran authorities provided Luis Santos with a bodyguard between the hours of 8am and 4pm. In January 2008, Luis Santos wrote to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to advise them that the measures taken by the government were inadequate, as he was most vulnerable outside these hours. He was not accompanied by his bodyguard when he was shot on 1 September.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In April and May 2008, Luis Santos participated in a 38-day hunger strike, along with nine other Public Prosecutors, to call for reform within the Public Prosecutor's Office with regard to the investigation of cases of corruption. A number of social, political, religious and human rights activists joined the protest and some of them have subsequently suffered death threats or attempts on their lives. On 15 May, Pedro Reyes, a member of the Evangelist church who took part in these demonstrations, was shot at by an unknown individual at his home. Fortunately, the bullets did not hit him.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Luis Santos and his family;
- urging the Minister of Security to ensure that immediate and effective measures are taken to guarantee the safety of Luis Santos and his family, in strict accordance with their wishes and for as long as is necessary to ensure their safety;

- calling for the Attorney General to order an immediate, thorough and swift investigation into the shooting of Luis Santos, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Security

Coronel (R) 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:

Foreign Affairs Minister

Sr. Ángel Edmundo Orellana Mercado

Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores

Centro Cívico Gubernamental, Boulevard Kuwait

Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Fax: +504 234 1484

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 17 October 2008.