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Death threats / Fear for safety

1 July 1994

HONDURAS Members of the COMITE DE FAMILIARES DE DETENIDOS DESAPARECIDOS EN HONDURAS (COFADEH), Committee of Relatives of the "Disappeared" in Honduras

Jorge VALLADARES VALLADARES, Assistant to the National Commissioner for the Protection of Human Rights

Amnesty International continues to be deeply concerned for the safety of those working on human rights in Honduras after receiving reports that the people listed above have been subjected to death threats and other intimidation during June 1994. The threats follow recent efforts by human rights organizations to press for investigations into past human rights abuses. Other human rights workers were threatened earlier in 1994 (see UA 115/94, AMR 37/03/94, 23 March).

The Honduran human rights organization COFADEH has reported that on 27 June a death threat against its members was found recorded on their answering machine.

The caller, who reportedly identified himself as *Sanidad Social*, Social Sanitation (a "death squad" active in the 1980s) said: *"This is the first warning: listen bitches, stop searching for your puppies because they are dead. Be careful with what you do, stop talking to the radio and television. You do not want more disappeared do you? Otherwise you will be the next ones"*.

COFADEH is a committee of mothers and relatives of "disappeared" people who have been actively searching for the whereabouts of their loved ones.

On 7 June, Jorge Valladares Valladares, was stopped by two unidentified gunmen who threatened him and stole some of his personal belongings. The office of the National Commissioner for the Protection of Human Rights (*Comisionado Nacional para la Protección de los Derechos Humanos*) has expressed its serious fears that the assault to Jorge Valladares Valladares is part of an intimidation campaign against those working on human rights. It has been reported that Jorge Valladares Valladares was subjected to death threats by an unidentified man in early December 1993 before the publication of the report of the National Commissioner for the Protection of Human Rights on "disappearances" in Honduras.

Those responsible for the threats have not been identified but there is concern that they may be connected with the intelligence service of the Honduran Armed Forces.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 29 December 1993 the National Commissioner for the Protection of Human Rights published a preliminary report on the "disappeared" in Honduras between 1980 and 1993. The report, *"Los Hechos Hablan por sí mismos"*, (*"The Facts Speak for Themselves"*), states that former and current military and civilian officials were responsible for the *"systematic, clandestine and organized"* disappearance of 184 individuals throughout the 1980s. Among the officials cited in the report for their responsibility are two former presidents and the current head of the armed forces. COFADEH has been pressing for the relevant investigations to take place.

The new government of President Carlos Roberto Reina, which took office on 27 January 1994, has promised to implement the Commissioner's recommendations which include bringing to justice those responsible for the "disappearances".

The new Attorney General has recently pledged to open the appropriate judicial investigations. The report also recommends judicial and military reforms, including restrictions on the powers of the military to investigate abuses by military personnel and the separation of military and police functions.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of the members of COFADEH and Jorge Valladares Valladares, following death threats and intimidation against them;
- urging the authorities to take measures to ensure their safety and the safety of all other human rights workers in Honduras;
- asking for assurances that all official complaints regarding death threats and attacks will be given due attention, so that the physical security of every Honduran citizen is guaranteed and the public confidence in the state's institutions is restored;
- asking for assurances that the recommendations of the Commissioner be complied with, especially those related to the bringing to justice of those responsible for human rights violations and the review of intelligence operations within the armed forces.

APPEALS TO

1) President of the Republic

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

Telegrams: Presidente Reina, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Faxes: +504 37 85 21

Telexes: 1129 MMRR HO/1429 HO

Salutation: Sr. Presidente/Dear Mr. President

2) President of the Supreme Court

Lic. Miguel Ángel Rivera Portillo
 Presidente de la Corte Suprema de Justicia
 Palacio de Justicia, Boulevard José Cecilio del Valle
 Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Telegrams: Presidente Corte Suprema, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Faxes: +504 33 7921

Salutation: Sr. Presidente de la Corte Supreme/Your Honour

3) Attorney General

Dr. Edmundo Orellana
 Fiscal General
 Ministerio Público
 Edificio Castillo Poujol
 4 Avd. Colonia Palmira, Boulevard Morazán
 Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Salutation: Sr. Fiscal General/Dear General Attorney

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Human Rights Commissioner

Lic. Leo Valladares Lanza
Comisionado Nacional para la Protección de los Derechos Humanos
Edificio Las Cumbres, Quinto piso
Ave. Cervantes, Apdo. 2986
Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Faxes: +504 38 7538

Human Rights Organization
COFADEH
Apartado Postal 1243, Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Faxes: +504 37 98 00

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 11 August 1994.