

URGENT ACTION HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

Public

AI Index: AMR 37/06/98

15 June 1998

Further information on UA Human Rights Defenders Network HRD-AMR 1/98 (AMR 37/05/98, 20 April 1998) - Fear for the safety of Ramón Custodio, human rights defender

HONDURAS

New information has renewed Amnesty International's fear for the safety of Ramón Custodio.

The chief of the Honduran armed forces, general Mario Raul Hung Pacheco, is once again trying to jail Dr. Ramon Custodio (President of CODEH - Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in Honduras).

After the general's request was denied in two consecutive instances we considered the matter settled, since the honduran supreme court has never overturned any decision under these conditions.

Nevertheless, the general's lawyer, Tomas Gerardo Aceituno, has now appealed to the Corte Suprema de Justicia in order to renew the request for an arrest warrant.

The supreme court will hear the case tomorrow. Please send your appeals immediately.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

At the beginning of April 1998, the head of the Armed Forces in Honduras, general Hung Pacheco, requested a court in the country to order the arrest of Ramon Custodio, president of the *Comité para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos en Honduras* (CODEH), Committee for the Defence of Human Rights in Honduras, and a member of the Human Rights Defenders Network. The general apparently accused Ramon Custodio of forging documents after the latter showed correspondence to the press in January this year in which the former head of the Armed Forces, general Humberto Regalado, ordered Hung Pacheco in 1988 to hand over a "disappeared" student to a counter-intelligence unit.

In February this year, a court had rejected a similar request by general Hung Pacheco. Given the present conditions in Honduras, where even government officials have been the subject of attacks, it causes grave concern that the head of the Armed Forces in Honduras should insist on putting obstacles to the work of a respected human rights defender.

Amnesty International believes that the increasing level of intimidation against human rights defenders is directly related to their efforts to expose serious past and present human rights violations in Honduras and pressurize the authorities into bringing the perpetrators to justice (see *Honduras: Continued struggle against impunity*; AMR 37/01/96, March 1996 and *Honduras: The beginning of the end of impunity*; AMR 37/01/95, June 1995 as well as UA 97/97; AMR 37/01/97, 10 April 1997, and most recently UA 50/98, February 1998).

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send urgent appeals in Spanish or your own language,

- condemning the action by the head of the Armed Forces to reiterate an accusation already

rejected twice by the courts;

- noting that this insistence could be interpreted as an attempt to intimidate human rights defenders in order to make them end their activities against impunity;

- urging the authorities in Honduras to take the necessary measures to put an end to the harassment and persecution against human rights defenders, and to guarantee that they can carry out their legitimate work;

- asking that the safety and personal integrity of Ramon Custodio and their colleagues are guaranteed;

- expressing support for the work of CODEH and everybody else working for the defence of human rights in Honduras.

APPEALS TO:

1) President of the Supreme Court

Lic. Óscar Amando Avila

Presidente de la Corte Suprema de Justicia

Palacio de la Justicia, Boulevard Jos, Cecilio del Valle, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Faxes: + 504 2336784

Telegrams: Presidente de la Corte Suprema, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Salutation: Presidente de la Corte/

Dear President of the Supreme Court

2) Directorate of Criminal Investigation

Dr. Wilfredo Alvarado

Director de la Dirección de Investigación Criminal (DIC)

7ª avenida, contigua Celocías Palermo

Comayaguala, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Faxes: +504 2200554

Telegrams: Director de Investigación Criminal, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Salutation: Sr. Director/Dear Director

3) Attorney General

Lic. Edmundo Orellana Mercado

Fiscal General. Fiscalía General de la República

Ministerio Público, Edificio Castillo Poujol

4ª Avda, Colonia Palmira, Boulevard Morazán, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Faxes: + 504 2393687 / 2394750

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Salutation: Sr. Fiscal General/Attorney General

COPIES TO:

Newspaper

Diario Tiempo

Lic. Manuel Gamero

Apartado Postal 450, San Pedro Sula, Honduras
Faxes: + 504 310425/18

Newspaper
El Nuevo día
Lic. Amando Cerrato
Edificio San Miguel, N° 359 calle Los Horcones, Barrio La Plazuela,
Apdo 1052 2020 Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Faxes: + 504 388990

Human rights organization
CODEH. Apartado Postal 3189
Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Faxes: + 504 37 9238
e-mails: codeh@ns.hondunet.net

and to diplomatic representatives of Honduras accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.