

PUBLIC

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UA 128/03 Fear for safety/Torture/Medical Concern

08 May 2003

HONDURAS **Marcelino Miranda (m) ] human rights defenders  
Leonardo Miranda (m) ] and brothers**

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Brothers, Marcelino and Leonardo Miranda, who are both indigenous leaders of the *Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Indígenas Populares (COPINH)*, Civic Council of Indigenous and Popular Organisations have allegedly been tortured and threatened by police officers in Gracias Prison, Lempira department. They have also allegedly been denied appropriate medical treatment.

During a routine prison check on 6 April, Marcelino Miranda was dragged out of his cell by three *Cobra* officers from an elite group in the National Police forces. Two officers allegedly punched him in the stomach, hit him on the back of his head with the butt of a gun and threw him to the ground while kicking him. They also allegedly threatened to kill him.

After assaulting him, the officers told Marcelino to call his brother, Leonardo. When Leonardo arrived he was reportedly punched and kicked and told to place his fingers on the side of the pavement. His fists were then reportedly hit with a heavy steel pipe. The whole incident is reported to have lasted for around 30 minutes. Fifteen days later the scars on Leonardo's knuckles were still visible.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 8 January 2003 Marcelino and Leonardo Miranda were taken by twenty-one armed police officers from the *Policía Nacional*, National Police, and armed civilians wearing ski masks, from the indigenous Lenca community in Montaña Verde, municipality of Gracias, Lempira department. According to reports the two men were tortured during the arrest and in front of their relatives, who were also threatened. The tortured reportedly continued as the two men were taken to the prison in Gracias municipality. At the prison, the police officers reportedly stabbed Leonardo Miranda in the head with a knife and threatened to kill him and his brother in their cells. Marcelino Miranda was forced to sign a confession under torture for unknown charges.

Amnesty International wrote to the Minister of Security on 23 January expressing concern about these allegations and requested that a thorough and independent investigation be carried out. The Minister was also asked to charge Marcelino and Leonardo Miranda with a recognizable criminal offence or release them. However, as far as Amnesty International is aware, no such investigation has taken place and no charges have been made against them.

For many years Amnesty International has been concerned about abuses against indigenous peoples in Honduras and the failure of the authorities to investigate the abuses and bring those responsible to justice. Much of the abuse against indigenous people has apparently been intended to obstruct the efforts of indigenous leaders to secure recognition of their community's land rights.

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

- expressing concerns for the safety of Marcelino and Leonardo Miranda following allegations that they were tortured and threatened on 6 April 2003;
- calling for an immediate investigation into the allegations of torture which took place both in January and April 2003, for the results to be made public and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- calling for Marcelino and Leonardo Miranda to be provided with any medical attention they may need;

-calling for their immediate and unconditional release unless they are to be charged with a recognizable criminal offence.

**APPEALS TO:**

Minister of Security

Dr. Oscar Alvarez  
Ministro de Seguridad Pública  
Ministerio de Seguridad Pública  
Edificio Poujol, 4o piso  
Col. Palmira (Blvd. Morazán)  
Tegucigalpa, Honduras  
**Telegrams: Ministro de Seguridad, Tegucigalpa, Honduras**  
**Fax: +504 220 4352**  
**Salutation: Dear Minister/Sñor Ministro**

Attorney General

Dr. Roy Edmundo Medina  
Fiscal General de la República  
Fiscalía General de la República  
Colonia Loma del Guijaro  
Tegucigalpa, Honduras  
**Telegram: Fiscal General de la República, Tegucigalpa, Honduras**  
**Fax: +504 221 5666**  
**Salutation: Dear Attorney General/ Señor Fiscal General**

Director of the National Police

Sra Coralia Rivera Ramos  
Directora General de la Policia Preventiva y Comisionada de Policia  
Cuartel General de la Policia Preventiva  
Barrio Casamata, Paseo el Picacho  
Tegucigalpa, Honduras  
**Telegram: Directora General de la Policia Preventiva, Tegucigalpa, Honduras**  
**Tel/fax: +504 238 1323 ( if someone answers ask for the fax: "me da tono de fax, por favor")**  
**Salutation: Dear Director of the National Police/ Sra. Directora General de la Policia**

**COPIES TO:**

Special Prosecutor for Ethnic Affairs

Licda. Jany del Cid  
Fiscal Especial de Etnias  
Edificio Castillo Poujol, 4ª. Avda,  
Colonia Palmira, Boulevard Morazán,  
Tegucigalpa, Honduras  
**Fax: + 504 221 5620 ( if someone answers ask for the fax: "me da tono de fax, por favor")**

National Commissioner for the Protection of Human Rights

Comisionado Nacional de Protección de los Derechos Humanos  
Ramón Custodio López  
Avda. La Paz No. 2444  
Contiguo a Galerías La Paz  
Tegucigalpa, Honduras  
**Fax: +504 235 35 32 (if someone answers ask for the fax: "me da tono de fax, por favor")**

Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas (COPINH)

Barrio Lempira,

Intibucá  
Honduras

**Fax:** +504 783 0817 (if someone answers ask for the fax: *“me da tono de fax, por favor”*)  
**e-mail:** copinh@hondutel.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 19 June 2003.