

PUBLIC

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UA 329/06 Fear for safety/Death threats

HONDURAS **Carlos Hernández (m), President of human rights NGO *Asociación para una Sociedad más Justa* (ASJ), Association for a More Just Society**  
**Dina Meza (f), ASJ Project Director and investigative journalist**  
**Robert Marín García (m), ASJ investigative journalist**  
**Claudia Mendoza (f), ASJ investigative journalist**  
**Rosa Morazán (f), ASJ investigative journalist**

**Killed: Dionisio Díaz García (m), ASJ lawyer and adviser to the journalism team**

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Dionisio Díaz García, a lawyer working for human rights organisation *Asociación para una Sociedad más Justa* (ASJ), Association for a More Just Society, was killed in the capital, Tegucigalpa, on 4 December. On the morning of 7 December the President of the organisation, Carlos Hernández, received a text message in English, which read: "You are the next because you are the heat [sic – head]". Other members of the organisation have also been threatened and intimidated in recent months. Amnesty International believes their lives are in danger.

Lawyer Dionisio Díaz García was working for the ASJ, a Christian organization working to promote economic, social and cultural rights. He had been representing various private security guards who claimed they had suffered unfair dismissal, among other labour rights violations. On 4 December he had driven to the Supreme Court to prepare for a hearing later that day. At around 10am, as he was nearing the court, he was shot dead by a man riding pillion on a motorbike. In the evening of 27 November, one of Dionisio Díaz García's colleagues had received an anonymous text message written in English: "The life of Dionisio García could be in danger¡!!! Take care, loock (sic) for someone closer to your enemies!!!".

The ASJ uses an e-magazine to publish reports of its investigations into unjust practices by companies, and readers can post responses. When they included reports featuring certain security firms, threatening responses were posted. On 31 October one such message read: *...al final de cuentas la justicia ha tomado su propio sendero en el cual se han cruzado los de ASJ, a sabiendas de que serán ajusticiados por las malas acciones que llevan sobre sus hombros* ("... In the end justice takes its own path, which the ASJ people have crossed, knowing that they will be killed for the evil actions they are responsible for"). The same week, ASJ activist Robert Marín García was warned by a third party that the location of his family home and his family's movements were known. The warning included the phrase *Te tenemos bien vigilado* ("We've got our eye on you").

Dionisio Díaz García and ASJ Project Director Dina Meza reported being followed by or watched from various cars without number plates close to the ASJ office on various occasions, from 29 August onwards. On 25 August several threatening calls were reportedly made to the ASJ office, including one from a man who said, *no saben con quién se han metido* ("you don't know who you're messing with").

The ASJ and other Honduran non-governmental organisations reported the threats and harassment of ASJ members to President Zelaya on 27 September and to the Attorney General the following day. During October and November they went on to report it to the Attorney General's Special Human Rights Office and the National Human Rights Commission. Despite this, the authorities took no visible action to protect ASJ members.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The ASJ, established in 1998, receives funding from several international Christian organizations for its social justice work. It began investigating violations of labour rights by private security firms in 2004.

Honduran human rights defenders are frequently attacked, threatened and intimidated because of their legitimate activities. Government efforts to protect human rights defenders at risk are sometimes hampered by long delays in acting on requests from the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights to protect specific individuals.

There are over 100 private security firms operating in Honduras. Some of these firms are reportedly hired by the Honduran government, including several of those accused of labour rights violations by the ASJ.

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

- requesting that the authorities provide immediate and effective protection for all ASJ members and their families, in accordance with their own wishes;
- urging the authorities to order a thorough and independent investigation into the murder of Dionisio Díaz García and the threats against other members of the ASJ, and to bring those responsible to justice;
- reminding the authorities of their obligations to recognize the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders and their right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties.

### **APPEALS TO:**

#### Public Security Minister

Álvaro Romero  
Minister of Public Security  
Ministry of Public Security  
Edificio Pujol, 4to. Piso, Col. Plamira (Blvd. Morazán)  
Tegucigalpa, Honduras

**Fax: +504 220 4352**

**Salutation: Dear Minister/Estimado Sr. Ministro**

#### Attorney General

Leónidas 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 Minister

Milton Jiménez Puerto  
Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores  
Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores  
Colonia Miraflores, Boulevard de las Fuerzas Armadas  
Contiguo al Palacio de Justicia, Edificio Antigua Casa Presidencial, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

**Fax: +504 234 1922/1484**

#### Human rights NGO

Asociación para una Sociedad más Justa (ASJ)  
Apartado Postal 30676, Toncontín  
Comayagüela, 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 19 January 2006