

UA 335/97 Apparent extrajudicial executions/
Fear for safety

29 October 1997

HONDURAS	Jorge Castillo, aged 28, killed)	
	Julián Alberto Morales, aged 17, killed)	
	Roberto Martínez, aged 45)	Indigenous
	Miguel Antonio Martínez, aged 50)	leaders and
	Salvador Zúniga)	activists
	Cándido Roberto Martínez)	
	Other members of the indigenous community)	

Amnesty International is extremely concerned at recent and ongoing human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings and death threats against Indian peasant leaders, perpetrated by businessmen and landowners, in collusion with local authorities, in land disputes in the community of Triunfo de la Cruz, Tela Atlantida.

On 21 October 1997, Jorge Castillo and Julián Alberto Morales, members of the *Garifunas* indigenous group, were reportedly extrajudicially executed by five heavily armed *terratenientes*, landowners, alleged to have links with local authorities.

In the same incident Roberto Martínez, Miguel Antonio Martínez and a number of other active leaders of the *Garifunas* indigenous people, were also ill-treated and threatened.

On 24 October, warrants for the arrest of a number of indigenous leaders were issued. This included Salvador Zúniga, President of *Comité de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Intibucá*, (COPIN), Committee of Indigenous and Popular Organizations of Intibucá and Cándido Roberto Martínez. This followed their participation in a peaceful meeting with other indigenous leaders to plan protest activities at the latest killings including a plan to stage a demonstration in the capital, Tegucigalpa.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Businessmen, in association with local landowners in Tela, wish to build an expensive tourist complex on land belonging to indigenous peoples on the seafront. The indigenous community are strongly opposed to this development which will destroy their homes and livelihood, which depends on the sea.

According to reports nine members of different indigenous groups have been murdered, reportedly extrajudicially executed, in 1997. To date impunity prevails in all these cases. The recent murders of Jorge Castillo and Julian Alberto Morales has heightened fears for the immediate safety of other indigenous people who have been subjected to a continuous and systematic campaign of human rights violations over some years in an apparent attempt to intimidate them into silence concerning land issues.

For further information please refer to the letter addressed to the President of Honduras TG AMR 37/03/97 on 20 May 1997 and to Urgent Action 274/97, AMR

37/03/97 on 14 August 1997 and follow ups AMR 37/04/97 on 15 August 1997 and AMR 37/05/97 on 19 August 1997 and CASA action 7/97.

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

- calling for a prompt, full and independent investigation into the reported extrajudicial execution of Jorge Castillo and Julián Alberto Morales and the ill-treatment of Roberto Martínez and Miguel Antonio Martínez, and other indigenous leaders on 21 October 1997;
- urging that those responsible be promptly brought to justice;
- calling for immediate and effective measures to ensure the safety of all indigenous people in Honduras;
- expressing concern at the impunity enjoyed by those responsible for the violations;

If possible:

- requesting the government comply with agreements signed at national and international level, mentioning some of the following: International Labour Organization (ILO), Covenant 169, signed in 1994 which specifically calls for the respect of indigenous cultures and return of indigenous lands; the May 1997 agreement, as well as others signed in July 1996, 1995 and 1994, between the Government of Honduras and indigenous peoples.

APPEALS TO:

1) President

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

Telegrams: Presidente, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Faxes: +504 344947

Salutation: Sr. Presidente / Dear President

2) Minister of Foreign Affairs

Sr. Delmar Orbizo
Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
Edificio Atalaya, Avenida La Paz
Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Telegrams: Ministro Relaciones Exteriores, Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Faxes: +504 31-0097

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

1) Ombudsman

Lic. Leo Valladares Lanza
Comisionado Nacional de Protección de los Derechos Humanos
Avda. Los Próceres 3623
Tegucigalpa MDC., Honduras

Faxes: +504 36 7213

Email: conadeh1@gbm.hn

2) Indigenous organizations

**Confederación de Pueblos Autóctonos
de Honduras (CONPAH)**

Apartado 20-585,
M.D.C. Honduras

Faxes: +504 25 49 25 (If voice: por favor me puede dar tono de fax)

E-mail: conpah%conpah@sdnhon.org.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 11 December 1997.