

URGENT ACTION

FAMILY OF DEAD MAN INTIMIDATED BY POLICE

The family of Mario Orlando Sequeira Canales, a Honduran citizen who died in police custody, is being intimidated. The police officers accused of killing him are facing trial and a police car has been repeatedly circling their home.

Mario Orlando Sequeira Canales, a Honduran citizen living in the United States, was detained on the evening of 1 June 2010 in Siguatepeque, central Honduras. He was in the country visiting his family. He died while in police custody some hours later. The forensic report concluded that he had been beaten and suffocated.

The police arrested him on the night of 1 June while he was staying in a hotel, allegedly because his drunken behaviour was a nuisance to other guests. A relative saw the arrest and went to the police station to find out why he had been arrested. They heard Mario Sequeira screaming from his cell but were not given a reason for his detention, and were told to come back the following day. The next day, the relative returned to the police station and was referred to the Public Prosecutor's Office, only to be told to go to the morgue in the Honduran capital, Tegucigalpa, where the family found Mario Sequeira's body. The family filed a complaint with the Public Prosecutor's office, asking for an investigation into the killing of Mario Sequeira.

Since then, the Sequeira Canales family has been subjected to intimidating surveillance. The same police officers responsible for Mario Sequeira's arrest repeatedly passed in front of the house in a police patrol car during the month of June. In addition, the family have noticed vehicles without license plates also circling the house. Since 6 September, further incidents of intimidating surveillance have taken place, shortly before the police officers accused of killing Mario Sequeira were due to appear in court. The police officers under investigation for the crime are currently not in detention, and are still carrying on with their duties in the town of Siguatepeque.

Members of the Sequeira Canales family have twice asked the Ministry of Interior and the Public Prosecutor's Office for protection. However, state officials have taken no steps to ensure the safety of the family while the trial is taking place, and they remain at risk. In previous cases in Honduras when police officers have been taken to court for human rights violations, witnesses have been subjected to intimidation and physical attacks during the investigation and trial. In a recent case, in March 2010 where a transgender woman took a police officer to court for attempted murder, she suffered several threats and attempts on her life during the trial.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to suspend the officers believed to be responsible, pending the outcome of the investigation for this crime;
- Calling for an independent, thorough and impartial investigation into the harassment and intimidation against the Sequeira Canales family and for the people responsible for the killing of Mario Sequeira to be held accountable;
- Urging that the authorities take immediate steps to offer protection to the Sequeira Canales family. The form of protection provided must be agreed with them and reflect their own wishes.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 9 NOVEMBER 2010 TO:

Attorney General

Sr. Luis Alberto Rubí
Fiscal General de la República,
Lomas del Guijarro, Avenida República
Dominicana, Edificio Lomas Plaza II,
Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Fax: + 504 221 5667

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/

Estimado Sr. Fiscal General

Carlos Africo Madrid Hart

Secretario de Estado
Secretaría de Estado en el Despacho de
Seguridad, Planteil Casamata, subida al
Picacho, Tegucigalpa, M.D.C, Honduras

Fax: +504 232 0226

Salutation: Dear Minister / Estimado

Sr.Ministro

And copies to:

Comité de Familiares de Detenidos

Desaparecidos en Honduras

(COFADEH)

Barrio La Plazuela, Avenida Cervantes

Casa No. 1301

Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Fax: +504 220 5280

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In Honduras, impunity is rife and the excessive use of force by state and security forces is rarely investigated. In December 2006 two environmental activists, Heraldo Zúñiga and Roger Iván Cartagena, members of the Environmentalist Movement of Olancho (MAO), were murdered by police officers. Family members of the two environmentalists, and other MAO members, were subsequently intimidated and subjected to surveillance as they pressed for justice. Members of the police force allegedly tampered with evidence at the crime scene in the run up to the trial. In 2008, the four police officers found guilty of the murders were detained at a military barracks pending sentencing. On 22 July, two of the officers managed to escape custody, followed by a third who also managed to escape a few days later.

In July 2008, three of the four policemen found guilty of the murder escaped the military barracks where they were held, and they were not brought to justice.

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