



On the front line

Regional Action Network on Human Rights Defenders

JAMAICA: Harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders for exposing police killings

Human rights activists and lawyers representing victims of alleged abuses continue to be the targets of threats and intimidation in Jamaica. Members of the human rights organization *Jamaicans for Justice*, are still receiving death threats because of their work for justice in cases of human rights violations. Attorney Dahlia Allen left Jamaica in August 2000 after alleging intimidation and harassment, including death threats. Dahlia Allen had represented a number of those ill-treated by the police in the forcible removal of street people from Montego Bay in June 1999, as well as some prisoners ill-treated during the course of disturbances in St. Catherine's prison in May 2000.

In a meeting with Amnesty

Members of Jamaicans for Justice demonstrate against police abuses in Kingston, Jamaica. ©Jamaican Observer newspaper

International in September 2000, Prime Minister Patterson (who is the only person who may authorise telephone tapping in Jamaica) strongly refuted allegations that Mrs Allen's telephone had been tapped and that she had been the subject of intimidation. However media reports stated in October that a number of illegal wiretaps had been carried out without the Prime Minister's consent or knowledge. Other members of human rights organizations have also reported surveillance of their work, including wire-tapping.

In March 2001, *Jamaicans for Justice (JFJ)* received another series of telephone death threats apparently connected to their work to seek justice in the case of the killing by police, on 14 March 2001, of seven young men in Braeton, near Kingston. The police claimed the men fired upon them after

officers requested them to give themselves up. According to the police, all seven were killed when the gun fire was returned. However, residents in the area claim they heard the men pleading for officers to spare their lives before the police took the men, one by one, into the house and executed them. The most disturbing threat against JFJ came on 23 March 2001 during a demonstration they organized against these killings. The office secretary took a call in which a man said he was going to get his gun and come to the office and kill everyone, then he was going to kill Carolyn Gomes, the director of JFJ. The death threats against JFJ continued in May 2001.

Those in authority have made a number of comments, which have been openly derisive of the work of human rights defenders. For example,

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the Chairman of the Police Federation made allegations suggesting links between a national human rights organisation and armed criminals. Such unsubstantiated comments are clearly intended to discredit and silence human rights defenders exposing the involvement of state agents in human rights violations. These comments may lead to further harassment of human rights defenders, the stifling of freedom of expression and the right to openly monitor and criticise the activities of state agents in relation to human rights.

Dr. Carolyn Gomes, director of JFJ, in reflecting on the organization's work last year told a Jamaican newspaper: "I think our work has had a tremendous impact. I think that part of the dialogue of the nation now has to do with human rights". She said that JFJ was sure that "more and more people are becoming aware of the fact that part of our failing as a nation is not to treat all of our citizens with justice, impartiality and even-handedness." JFJ believe that Jamaicans are gradually becoming aware of the dangers of police excesses, the fact they should not be tolerated and that the systems in place are not functioning adequately. Dr. Gomes has affirmed that JFJ "will continue to pressure for justice for Jamaicans".

Latin American Consultation on Human Rights Defenders

The following is a press release issued by the participants in the Latin American Consultation on Human Rights Defenders which was held in Mexico City on 13-15 June 2001. Further details of the conclusions of this Consultation, including the action plans developed and the speeches of Hina Jilani, Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on Human Rights Defenders, will shortly be circulated by the Americas Human Rights Defenders Program.

Over 40 human rights defenders from 18 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, representing hundreds of non-governmental organizations from throughout the region, came together in Mexico City on 13-15 June to meet with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on Human Rights Defenders and discuss with her the hazards of striving for the defence and promotion of human rights in the Americas and to propose and coordinate actions to protect human rights defenders. The conclusions of the Consultation were alarming.

The struggle for human rights in Latin America and the Caribbean continues

to entail severe risks to the life, physical integrity and liberty of those who defend human rights. The security of defenders has worsened in several countries. For instance, at the start of the Latin American Consultation on Human Rights Defenders, a total of 46 social activists had been murdered in Colombia this year alone. By the end of the Consultation, only three days later, the figure had climbed to 52.

Throughout the region, thousands of human rights defenders continue to suffer defamation campaigns, harassment, obstacles to their freedom of association, threats, assaults, the loss of liberty, and other severe human rights violations, including murder and "disappearances", only because they are fighting for rights that are universally acknowledged. This severe situation calls into question the commitment by States in our region to the protection and promotion of human rights and brings with it severe and growing risks to the survival of our fragile democracies, since democracy can never be consolidated without a strong and unrestricted human rights movement, of which human rights defenders are indispensable actors.

It is therefore urgent to pay attention and respond effectively to the situation and secure full guarantees for the human rights movement and the security of defenders and their work in the region. We welcome the willingness and commitment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on Human Rights Defenders to attend this Consultation to improve the protection of defenders in the region, and we call on the American States to follow her example and meet their obligations in this area.

Organising Committee of the Latin

American Consultation on Human Rights Defenders: Comité de Defensa de Defensores, Red Nacional de Organismos Civiles de Derechos Humanos "Todos los Derechos para Todos", Mexico; Comité Ad-Hoc para Defensores, Colombia; Amnesty International; and Human Rights Defenders Office, International Service for Human Rights, Switzerland.
Mexico City, 15 June 2001

Special Representative to the Secretary General of the United Nations on human rights defenders presents her report

Hina Jilani, who last year was named Special Representative to the Secretary General of the United Nations on Human Rights Defenders, presented her first report to the UN Commission on Human Rights at its 57th Session in April 2001 [Index number: E/CN.4/2001/94]. The following is an abridged version of the concluding remarks of her report.

Significant advances have been made in recent years in creating or strengthening legal and normative frameworks for the protection of human rights defenders in many parts of the world. However, one recurrent problem remains the lack or inefficient implementation of these norms in practice. The Special Representative is particularly eager to develop strong working relationship with mechanisms established at the national or subregional level with a view to promoting and protecting human rights. Similarly, she will seek to study the legislation and jurisprudence of Member States with a view to defining, in a progressive manner, a set of "good experiences or practices" which she will share with

governmental or non-governmental partners. Lastly, she will also seek innovative forms of cooperation in promoting the rights of human rights defenders, including in the area of dissemination of information and awareness-building.

The Special Representative is deeply concerned at the considerable number of communications she has already received that allege serious violations targeting human rights defenders throughout the world. In particular, the Special Representative is concerned that a variety of repressive trends, measures and practices persist

Hina Jilani, Special Representative to the Secretary General of the UN on Human Rights Defenders ©AI

which threaten the freedom of action of human rights defenders. No region is free of these trends. While the sources of support for human rights defenders have been slow to emerge, the quarters from which the threats emanate are growing fast. The failure of States to offer effective guarantees against the violation of fundamental rights has given a more critical dimension to issues of human security. Disparities in economic, social and political empowerment emphasize the need for groups and individuals who strive to facilitate the exercise of rights by others. It is an unfortunate reality that the role of

human rights defenders is not recognized or accepted by Governments in many parts of the world. State apparatus, oppressive laws and other tools of repression continue to be used against defenders in attempts to deter them from the valuable work they contribute to the promotion of human rights. (...)

The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention reported cases of 15 human rights defenders from eight countries. The Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers expressed concern at information received in 34 cases from 16 countries regarding the violation of rights to which human rights defenders were being subjected. The Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression expressed concern regarding the cases of 18 defenders in 8 countries. Reports of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances contained information on cases of 13 defenders in 7 countries. The Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions reported on violence and threats of violence faced by 21 human rights defenders in 11 countries. The Special Rapporteur on torture reported on cases of 61 defenders from 21 countries. These were cases that these special procedures could take up within their mandates. There are several more who are not covered by these mandates and who are consistently being subjected to oppressive practices which have serious consequences that diminish prospects for the promotion and protection of human rights in many parts of the world.

The measure of success of the work of the Special Representative would be the degree of security that this mechanism can instil in those acting for the promotion and protection of human rights. To achieve the purpose for which the mandate has been established the Special Representative

considers the following as requiring her special attention:

(a) The activities of armed groups, sponsored by the State or acting independently, as well as those of military, paramilitary or other security groups, have become a major threat to the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms. These groups pose a major threat to the security of human rights defenders and are directly or indirectly undermining or jeopardizing their work. This well-known factor will need specific consideration within the framework of this particular mandate. The experience gained by other special procedures, by treaty bodies or by OHCHR field presences (see E/CN.4/2000/11) will be of great assistance in identifying the main issues to be dealt with, the objectives which the Special Representative may reasonably wish to achieve and the specific strategies which would have to be developed to reach them;

(b) As mentioned above, the rights to freedom of association, assembly and movement are not specifically covered by any particular thematic mandate. It is urgent to undertake a comprehensive review of the implementation of the Declaration in this area and dwell in an appropriate manner on the investigation of individual cases;

(c) One of the main characteristics of the Declaration is to address defenders as a group or as individuals with specific rights and freedoms. It is important to study the repressive measures faced by the defenders as groups, as well as the risks they face as individuals active in the promotion and protection of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights;

(d) The Special Representative intends to pay particular attention to devising appropriate strategies for the implementation of the Declaration's

provisions relating to the protection of human rights activists seeking democratic transformation and reacting against or opposing, through peaceful means, acts resulting in violation of human rights; See article 18 of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders:

"1. Everyone has duties towards and within the community, in which alone the free and full development of his or her personality is possible.

"2. Individuals, groups, institutions and non-governmental organizations have an important role to play and a responsibility in safeguarding democracy, promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms and contributing to the promotion and advancement of democratic societies, institutions and processes.

"3. Individuals, groups, institutions and non-governmental organizations also have an important role and a responsibility in contributing, as appropriate, to the promotion of the right of everyone to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights instruments can be fully realized."

(e) Human rights defenders may be targeted in many different ways, including by the enactment of laws criminalizing certain aspects of human rights activity, or for exercising their freedoms of association, assembly, information and movement. Regulatory frameworks may be imposed to limit their freedom of association or restricting the scope of activities by non-governmental organizations. This structural threat to the activities of human rights defenders will need specific attention in the work of the Special Representative and, accordingly, she will coordinate and compile any such legislation or regulatory framework with a view to drawing lessons from them and formulating appropriate

recommendations to overcome their negative consequences insofar as the enjoyment of the rights set forth in the Declaration is concerned;

(f) The situation of human rights defenders subjected to prosecution and judicial investigation under such laws and their sentencing after unfair trials will be a matter of serious concern for the Special Representative. It will be of particular importance to determine what measures or steps should be contemplated by the Special Representative in cooperation with Member States with a view to looking into the matter, drawing specific conclusions and recommending remedial measures to the concerned authorities, including forms of compensation;

(g) Greater risks are faced by defenders of the rights of certain groups as their work challenges social structures, traditional practices and interpretations of religious precepts that may have been used over long periods of time to condone and justify violation of the human rights of members of such groups. Of special importance will be women's human rights groups and those who are active on issues of sexuality, especially sexual orientation and reproductive rights. These groups are often very vulnerable to prejudice, to marginalization and to public repudiation, not only by State forces but by other social actors. The Special Representative will undertake or encourage studies of any such phenomena with a view to drawing up a compendium of possible measures to enhance the protection of such human rights defenders;

(h) As was made clear in the context of the adoption of the Declaration and the setting-up of this mandate, reprisals and repressive measures may be taken against individuals and groups who have reported alleged

human rights abuse to international bodies, including the United Nations human rights mechanisms. It is the intention of the Special Representative to explore such matters further since occurrences of such violations are detrimental to the activities of procedures which are at the core of the United Nations human rights mechanisms;

(i) Lastly, the Special Representative will pay attention to the long-standing issue of states of emergency and the ensuing occurrence of impunity insofar as they affect the activities of human rights defenders. In several countries, appropriate human rights legislation may have been enacted long ago without being properly implemented because of an almost continuous state of emergency. The extent to which such legislation may be of relevance in the consideration of the rights of human rights defenders will need to be examined with attention. (...)

20 years of FEDEFAM: "Disappearances" and the project for a Convention

At its 57th session in April 2001, the UN Commission on Human Rights adopted, by consensus, a resolution to establish, at its next session, a Working Group to study the draft International Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances. The draft Convention advances the international protection of victims of "disappearances" in a substantive way. The establishment of the Working Group marked a major achievement by those human rights groups who, for many years, have lobbied for a UN Convention against Enforced Disappearances. One of the groups at the forefront of this campaign has been, the Federación de Familiares de los Desaparecidos Detenidos de Latinoamérica (FEDEFAM), Federation of Relatives of the Detained-Disappeared in Latin America which this year celebrates its 20th anniversary. The following is a summary of a speech made by the President of FEDEFAM, Marta Ocampo de Vásquez, on the eve of the resolution to establish the Working Group.

"As a representative of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, I had the privilege of attending, in January 1981 in Costa Rica a meeting which brought

together, for the first time, representatives of associations of relatives of detained-disappeared people from Latin America and the Caribbean.

"The slogan for the Congress was "there is no useless pain" (*no hay dolor inútil*). This pain united us and gave us the strength to start our struggle to be reunited with our children and relatives. In my country, Argentina, we started this struggle 24 years ago. FEDEFAM was initiated 20 years ago this year.

"In our second Congress we began to talk about "crimes against humanity" and "the need for a Convention". Having established FEDEFAM we returned to our countries with a new vision of our fight to "defend human rights". We expanded in Latin America because each year new countries emerged where state terrorism was introducing the practice of "disappearances".

"Today FEDEFAM is made up of 17 associations representing 11 countries. We can state openly that the Federation's priority is Colombia, where our friends have to endure, on a daily basis, "disappearances", torture, killings, massacres and the displacement of the civilian population.

"In other countries like Guatemala, Mexico and Honduras, threats and persecution against relatives of the detained-disappeared and human rights defenders continue. Peace accords have been signed in some countries, such as Guatemala and El Salvador. The relatives of the "disappeared" publically condemn the lack of compliance with accords, point out shortcomings in some of the accords and alert those of us from other countries which may, in the future, find themselves in a similar

situation.

“State-lead repression based on National Security Doctrine and implemented in Latin America, both by dictatorships and by democratic governments, created some 100,000 victims. The killers, the repressors and the executors of this plan have acted and still act with almost complete impunity.

“Impunity continues entrenched in our countries and the consequence is that, today, fundamental principles such as the right to life are still violated. The respect for people’s dignity, for truth and justice are the ethical principles on which life in society is based. Impunity attacks these foundations until they are destroyed. As impunity increases, so does the fragility of the democratic system and, inversely, with justice and accountability comes a greater guarantee of democratic integration.

“Fedefam’s first *project for a Convention* arose out of our second Congress, in November 1981 in Caracas. The project, which reflected the aspirations of the relatives, was approved in the third Congress in Lima in 1982 and presented to the UN in February 1983.

“The UN Declaration on the ‘Protection of all people against forced disappearance’, approved in December 1992, was an achievement but has been insufficient because it is not a binding instrument. As a consequence, states do not fulfil their obligation to adopt essential measures to end “disappearances” so that peace, truth, justice, solidarity, freedom and equality for all can become a reality. This is the desire of all the relatives and NGOs meeting here, and we hope that the 57th UN Session on Human Rights will create a working group on the issue of the draft Convention approved by the subcommission in August 1998.

“We must recognize several important changes in this long fight for the defence of human rights on an international and national level. The trials which are taking place in Spain, Italy, France, Germany and now Sweden and the detention of Pinochet in England, and his subsequent return to his country, are events which signal an awakening in the struggle for human rights at an international level. In several countries the judgements which keep the repressors in prison or the trials which have been initiated to discover the truth, have opened a new panorama of light and hope for all relatives across the whole continent where there is now no country where “disappearance” is not used against the defenceless.

Marta O. de Vásquez, President of FEDEFAM

Organizations affiliated to FEDEFAM are: Argentina: Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, Familiares de Detenidos y Desaparecidos por Razones Políticas, y Madres de Plaza de Mayo (Línea Fundadora); Bolivia: Asociación Nacional de Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos y Mártires por la Liberación Nacional (ASOFAMD); Brazil: Grupo ‘Tortura Nunca Mais’ (GTNM); Colombia: Asociación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos (ASFADDES); Chile: Agrupación Nacional de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos (AFDD); El Salvador: Comité de Madres ‘Mons. Romero’, Comité de Familiares de Desaparecidos (COFADEH); Mexico: Asociación de Familiares de Desaparecidos y Víctimas de las Violaciones de los Derechos Humanos (AFADEM); Peru: Asociación Nacional de Familiares de Desaparecidos de Perú (ANFASEP) y Comité de Familiares Residentes en Lima (COFADER); Uruguay: Madres y Familiares de Desaparecidos de Uruguay.

Organization of American States adopts third resolution on human rights defenders

At the General Assembly of the OAS, held in Costa Rica in June 2001, a resolution, “Human Rights Defenders in the Americas”, [AG/RES. 1818 (XXXI-O/01)] was adopted which further strengthens the support and recognition by the regional human rights body of the work of individuals, groups and non-governmental organizations who promote human rights. This resolution follows two others of the same name adopted by the two previous General Assemblies. In an important point of progress the General Assembly requests, in the latest resolution, that the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights consider preparing a comprehensive study of the situation of human rights defenders in the Americas.

AG/RES. 1818 (XXXI-O/01)
5 June 2001 (Original: Spanish)

Human rights defenders in the Americas: support for the individuals, groups, and organizations of civil society working to promote and protect human rights in the Americas

The General Assembly, **Having seen** resolution AG/RES. 1711 (XXX-O/00), “Human Rights Defenders in the Americas,” which instructs the Permanent Council to promote the examination of this matter in the context of the dialogue on strengthening and enhancing the inter-American human rights system, and to report on the implementation thereof;

Considering: That in the context of the dialogue on the functioning of the

system, and pursuant to the mandate contained in operative paragraph 3 of resolution AG/RES. 1711 (XXX-O/00), on February 28, 2001, the Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs of the Permanent Council held a meeting at which it considered the topic and engaged in constructive dialogue that involved representatives of various regional and national nongovernmental human rights organizations active in member states; and

That in its recent annual reports, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) has expressed its grave concern over the situation of human rights defenders in the region, and has recommended that the member states should take the necessary steps to protect the life, personal security, and freedom of expression of those who work to ensure respect for fundamental rights, in accordance with the collective commitment expressed in OAS General Assembly resolutions AG/RES. 1671 (XXIX-O/99) and AG/RES. 1711 (XXX-O/00);

Bearing in mind the practice of the IACHR in this area, and the measures it has taken to protect the fundamental rights of defenders;

Recalling: That at the Second Summit of the Americas, held in Santiago, Chile, the Heads of State and Government affirmed that "respect for and promotion of human rights and the fundamental freedoms of all individuals is a primary concern of our governments"; and that while at the Third Summit of the Americas, held in Quebec, Canada, they pledged to "seek to promote and give effect to the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders"; and that the OAS General Assembly has stated its consistent views on this subject, reiterating its recommendation that member states "grant the necessary guarantees and facilities to enable non-governmental human rights

organizations to continue contributing to the promotion and protection of human rights, and that they respect the freedom and safety of the members of such organizations";

Recognizing the important work, at both the national and regional levels, of human rights defenders in the Americas, as well as their valuable contribution to the protection and promotion of fundamental rights and freedoms;

Concerned over the persistence in the Americas of situations that directly or indirectly prevent or hamper the work of individuals, groups, or organizations working to protect and promote fundamental rights; and

Aware of the need to observe the essential aims, principles, and standards set forth in inter-American and international instruments in this area,

Resolves:

1. To reiterate its support for the work carried out, at both the national and regional levels, by human rights defenders; and to recognize their valuable contribution to the protection, promotion, and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Americas.
2. To deplore acts that directly or indirectly prevent or hamper the work of human rights defenders in the Americas.
3. To urge member states to step up their efforts to adopt the necessary measures, in keeping with their domestic law and with internationally accepted principles and standards, to guarantee the life, personal safety, and freedom of expression of human rights defenders.
4. To invite member states to publicize and enforce the instruments of the inter-American system and the decisions of its bodies in this matter, as well as the United Nations

Declaration on the right and responsibility of individuals, groups, and institutions to promote and protect universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms.

5. To request the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) to continue to pay due attention to the situation of human rights defenders in the Americas and to consider preparing a comprehensive study in this area which, inter alia, describes their work, for study by the pertinent political authorities.

6. To instruct the Permanent Council to follow up on this resolution and to report to the General Assembly at its thirty-second regular session on the implementation thereof.

TAKE ACTION TO SUPPORT HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS!

NICARAGUA: Government smear campaign against human rights defenders

The Nicaraguan government has intensified a smear campaign against Vilma Núñez de Escorcia, president of the *Centro Nicaragüense de Derechos Humanos* (CENIDH), Nicaraguan Centre for Human Rights and there are fears there may be direct attacks on her, her colleagues and their families. From January to March this year she also received repeated telephone death threats.

Since 1999 the Nicaraguan government has claimed that Vilma Núñez de Escorcia and CENIDH have links with the illegal armed group *Frente Unido Andrés Castro* (FUAC), the Andrés Castro United Front. Nicaraguan radio and newspapers reported these allegations as fact. CENIDH repeatedly challenged the government to hand over any evidence it had to the Attorney General (*Fiscal General*), so that they could answer these allegations in court. When it finally did so, the Attorney General officially dismissed the government's claims as unfounded, on 8 May 2001. Despite this, the government has not retracted its claims, and is continuing its smear campaign against CENIDH.

Vilma Núñez has also been threatened and harassed by anonymous phone calls and letters, and repeated rumours of plots to kill her. In the past, pro-government newspapers and radio stations have said that "her death might be the answer to the unrest in northern Nicaragua".

In December 2000, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (ICHR) asked the Nicaraguan authorities to provide protection for Vilma Núñez

and CENIDH. They have now been given police protection, but the police investigation into the campaign of death threats has reportedly been inadequate.

The work of CENIDH over the years, at times under difficult conditions, has been very important for the protection and respect of human rights in Nicaragua. They have mediated for the release of hostages held by FUAC, but also investigated extrajudicial executions of FUAC leaders. They also took up the case of nurse Dorothy Virginia Granada, a US citizen whom the authorities accused of having links with FUAC and carrying out abortions, which are illegal in Nicaragua. The Ministry of the Interior attempted to deport her but failed after CENIDH appealed before the courts.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Please send letters or faxes in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing grave concern at the government's continuing public campaign to discredit Vilma Núñez de Escorcia and CENIDH and that they have also suffered a campaign of anonymous death threats;
- asking to be informed of progress in the investigation into the death threats against Vilma Núñez de Escorcia and CENIDH has made;
- reminding the government that the right to defend human rights has been internationally recognised and established in the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, of 9 December 1998;
- calling on the authorities to make clear and unequivocal public statements recognising the important contribution of the work of human

rights defenders to promoting respect for human rights and the rule of law.

APPEALS TO:

President of Nicaragua

S.E. Arnoldo Alemán

Presidente de la República de Nicaragua

Casa de la Presidencia

Avenida Bolívar y Dupla Sur.

Managua, Nicaragua

Fax: + 505 2 287 911

Salutation: Sr. Presidente/ Dear Mr President

Minister of the Interior

Ingeniero José Bosco Marengo Cardenal

Ministerio de Gobernación

Del Redentor 1c y ½ abajo

Apartado 68

Managua, Nicaragua

Fax: + 505 2 227 778

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/ Dear Minister

ARGENTINA: Attack against daughter of president of *Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo*

María Alejandra Bonafini, the daughter of the President of the *Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo* Mothers of Plaza de Mayo Association, Hebe de Bonafini, was attacked and tortured, in the house she shares with her mother in La Plata, Buenos Aires Province. On 25 May, two men, who had identified themselves as telephone repair men, forced their way past her into the house. They put a plastic bag over her head and beat her with an object that a doctor, who later examined her, indicated may have been a chain covered by a hose-pipe. They burnt her arms and back with cigarettes.

María Alejandra Bonafini has

previously received death threats in connection with her mother's work as a high profile human rights. Some months before this attack Hebe de Bonafini is also reported to have received a telephone death threat in which she was told they were going to hit her "where it hurts the most".

It is believed that the threats to María Alejandra Bonafini are related to her mother's outspoken condemnation of the human rights situation in Argentina. The *Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo* is a women's human rights organization set up to campaign for justice on behalf of their children and other relatives who "disappeared" during the years of military government (1976-1983).

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send faxes or letters either in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern at the attack and torture of Maria Alejandra Bonafini on 25 May;
- calling for a prompt, full and impartial investigation into the attack, for the results to be made public and for those responsible to be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Justice and Human Rights

Sr. Ministro de Justicia y Derechos Humanos

Dr. Jorge de la Rúa

Ministerio de Justicia y Derechos Humanos

Sarmineto, 329- 5 piso

1041 Buenos Aires, Argentina

Fax: + 54 11 4328 5395

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

Minister of the Interior

Sr. Ministro del Interior

Dr. Federico Storani

Ministerio del Interior

Balcerce 50

1064 Buenos Aires, Argentina

Fax: + 54 11 4342 6081

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

Public

NOTICE BOARD

West African human rights defenders launch campaign for their protection

This is an abridged version of the Resolution adopted in Dakar, Senegal following the launch of a report and campaign to promote and protect the work of human rights defenders in West Africa in April 2001. The events were attended by human rights defenders from Benin, Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations' on Human Rights Defenders.

The events were organized by the Senegalese Coalition of Human Rights Defenders in cooperation with Amnesty International-Senegal.

"We, representatives of national coalitions of human rights organizations from 13 countries in West Africa, call urgently on all the Governments of West Africa:

- to fully recognize the legitimacy of human rights defence work by implementing the principles of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders;

- to cease all forms of persecution of human rights defenders;

- to take adequate measures to ensure that all state officials respect the work of human rights defenders and refrain from obstructing their work or generating hostility against them, including women human rights defenders;

- to thoroughly investigate cases of violations of the rights of human rights defenders and bring to justice those responsible;

- to maintain permanent dialogue with non-governmental organizations on the implementation of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and other international and regional human rights instruments;

- to make public statements in favour of the work of human rights defenders and to guarantee their safety;

- to grant asylum to human rights defenders from other countries fleeing persecution;

- to educate and sensitize the general public about the important role of human rights defenders in democratic society, and to this end to establish a National Human Rights Defenders Day; - to ratify all international and regional human rights treaties and to make national laws and practices conform to them, and also to the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. **Dakar, April 2001.**

The participants at the launch of the West Africa Human Rights Defenders Action in Dakar, Senegal in April 2001 ©AI

Amnesty International, AMR 01/007/2001

For further information and copies of the Report - "**West Africa: 'Be careful, you talk too much' - Human rights defenders under attack**", Amnesty International, April 2001, AI Index: AFR 05/001/2001 (in English and French), please contact: Musa Gassama, West Africa Human Rights Defenders Coordinator, Amnesty International-Senegal Section, BP 21910 Dakar, Senegal; email: mgassama@amnesty.org.

Peace Brigades International wins 2001 Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders

In April 2001, the international Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders was awarded to Peace Brigades International (PBI) for its work to provide unarmed protection to human rights defenders under threat in Colombia.

Amidst the escalating violence in Colombia, which has been characterised by blatant disregard for human rights and international humanitarian law, human rights defenders have been subject to a systematic campaign of intimidation, harassment and attacks which has cost many their lives. PBI Colombia Project, established in 1994, has a team of international volunteers who accompany defenders from some 20 Colombian human rights organisations displaced communities in Bogotá, Medellín, Barrancabermeja and Turbo. Accompanying human rights defenders in their offices and as they go about their work, PBI's international volunteers provide protection because those interested in carrying out attacks against human

rights defenders know that their crimes will be witnessed and reported to the international community. "*The death sentences against each and every one of us have not been carried out because we are not alone, we have the accompaniment of Peace Brigades International,*" stated one Colombian human rights defender.

The Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders is granted annually to an individual or an organization who has displayed exceptional courage in combatting human rights violations. The Martin Ennals Foundation represents a unique collaboration among nine of the world's leading non-governmental human rights organizations: Amnesty International, the International Commission of Jurists, Human Rights Watch, International Alert, Diakonia Human Rights Desk, Defence for Children International, World Organisation Against Torture, the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues and HURIDOCs.

To find out about volunteering with PBI in Colombia or for more information about the organization, please contact: PBI Colombia Project, Archway Resource Centre, 1a Waterlow Rd, London N19 5NJ U K . E - m a i l : pbicolombia@g.n.apc.org.

Publications on human rights defenders

Central America and Mexico: Human rights defenders on the front line.

Amnesty International, December 1996. [AI Index: AMR 02/01/96] Available in Spanish and English

Human rights defenders in Latin America: More protection, less persecution.

Amnesty International, June 1999. [AI Index: AMR 01/02/99] Available in Spanish, English and French.

Protection of human rights defenders in Colombia: One step forward, three steps back.

Amnesty International, May 2000. [AI Index: AMR 23/22/00] Available in Spanish, English and French.

Colombia: Robust measures urgently needed to protect human rights defenders. The case of ASFADDES.

Amnesty International, February 2001. [AI Index: AMR 23/023/2001] Available in Spanish and English.

The right to defend human rights in the Americas. (Leaflet).

Amnesty International [AI Index: AMR 01/04/00] Available in Spanish, English, French and Portuguese.

If you would like to receive copies of these reports please contact: Americas Human Rights Defenders Program, Amnesty International, International Secretariat, 1 Easton St, London WC1X 0DW, UK. Email:

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