

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: AMR 37/021/2003 (Public)
News Service No: 271
28 November 2003

Honduras: Amnesty International demands an investigation by the authorities into the death of a journalist

Amnesty International strongly condemns the murder of the journalist Germán Antonio Rivas during the night of 26 November in Santa Rosa de Copán, in the department of Copán, and demands that the authorities launch an investigation without delay.

Reports indicate that the Honduran journalist, managing director of the corporation Maya Visión's Channel 7, was shot in the head by an unidentified person as he got out of his car near his place of work.

On 24 February 2003, Germán Antonio Rivas survived an attack close to his home, when an unknown person shot at him while he was parking his car in front of the garage at his home.

Shortly before this incident, he had investigated and publicly condemned the Compañía de Minerales de Occidente for discharging cyanide into the River Lara, which supplies drinking water to the population of Santa Rosa de Copán. As a result of the report, the Secretaría de Recursos Naturales Department of Natural Resources imposed a 170,000 dollar fine on the company for the ecological damage caused.

In spite of the fact that the February incident was reported to a number of bodies, no thorough investigation was ever undertaken to identify the perpetrators of the attack.

Amnesty International welcomes the initial enquiries under way to investigate the murder, but calls on the authorities to ensure that the investigation into the death of Germán Antonio Rivas, which should be thorough and impartial, follows its course, so that this death does not go unpunished.

Amnesty International is documenting serious violations and abuses of the human rights of individuals who defend the environment. The organisation believes that activists are being attacked as a result of their efforts to protect the natural environment from commercial interests.

The death of the environmentalist Carlos Arturo Reyes on 18 July 2003 in El Rosario, in the department of Olancho, was not, unfortunately, an isolated event.

The organisation is seriously concerned that the murder of Germán Antonio Rivas could be related to the legitimate exercise of his profession reporting on environmental irregularities in Honduras perpetrated by individuals.

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

For latest human rights news view <http://news.amnesty.org>