

via fax: 011 505 2255 6832 Dr. Julio Centeno Gómez Attorney General of the Republic of Nicaragua	via fax: 011 505 2277 1871 Primera Comisionada Aminta Granera Sacasa Head of the National Police of Nicaragua
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March 10, 2011

Dear Sir and Madam:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force on Central America, are gravely concerned for the safety of **Luis Galeano**, a reporter with the newspaper *El Nuevo Diario*, whose life has been threatened on two occasions. On February 19, he received a message left for him by an unknown man at the reception desk of the *El Nuevo Diario* office. It warned him not to publish an article about recent research he and a colleague did on a corruption case concerning allegations of misuse of funds between 2004 and 2008, which officials in the Supreme Electoral Council estimate at US\$20million. The message ended by saying, "What you're trying to do is to compromise the Supreme Electoral Council, given that on March 1 [political] alliances will be registered...We're not joking. Free country or death."

A few hours later someone telephoned Luis Galeano and said, "You have 72 hours to change your mind about what you'll publish, otherwise your family won't see you anymore". *El Nuevo Diario* published the article about the case on February 21.

These threats are part of a pattern of intimidation against the press in Nicaragua which has increased in recent months in the context of debate preceding the November 2011 presidential elections. Amnesty International has documented a series of incidents involving attacks on journalists, government critics and civil society activists. In November 2009, pro-government supporters in Managua threw stones against a group of demonstrators protesting corruption and curbs on freedom of expression. They broke the door of a police station where the protesters had taken refuge. On February 11, a correspondent for *El Nuevo Diario* in Masaya was intimidated after having published an article involving a relative of the head of the local police.

Because of our concern about these situations, we **strongly urge** you to

- institute an independent, thorough and impartial investigation into the threats against Luis Galeano, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;
- take immediate steps to provide appropriate protection to him, according to his wishes.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai,
Coordinator

CC: CENIDH ~ via US mail
 Arturo Cruz Sequeira Jr , Nicaragua Ambassador to US ~ via fax: 202-939-6545
 Harold Rivas Reyes ~ Nicaraguan General Consul ~ via fax: 202.939.6574
 Robert Callahan, US Ambassador to Nicaragua ~ via fax: 011-505-266-3861
 John Ballard, Nicaragua Desk at the US State Dept ~ via fax: 202-647-2597
 Dinah Shelton, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: (202)458-3992
 US Senators Brown and Portman ~ via email
 US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Renacci, Ryan, Sutton ~ via email

The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: