

via fax: 011 503 2281 5959 Sr. Rene Figueroa Interior Minister, El Salvador	via fax: 011 503 2243 9658 Sr. Francisco Esteban Lainez Rivas Minister of Foreign Affairs, El Salvador
via fax: 011 503 2249 8613 Lic.Felix Garrid Safie Attorney General, El Salvador	via fax: 011 503 2245 1554 Sr. Rodrigo Avila Director General of the National Civilian Police, El Salvador

August 13, 2006

We are extremely concerned for the safety of **William Hernández**, director of Asociación Entre Amigos, and other staff who work on behalf of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people (LGBT) in El Salvador.

On June 1 at 4:30pm William Hernandez was threatened at gunpoint outside his office in San Salvador. An unidentified man approached him from behind, put a gun to his neck, made threatening remarks, grabbed his briefcase and ran off. This happened soon after the police officer, who is assigned to protect him, had left him for the day.

The Entre Amigos office had been raided just two days before. The intruders broke three windows, searched files, took documents, and left two written threats. The organization had been planning a demonstration in front of the Legislative Assembly opposing the ratification of a constitutional reform banning same-sex couples from marrying and adopting children. Even though the organization has since moved to a new office, staff are still fearful because several unidentified men keep watch outside the office for hours each day.

In addition to providing sex education to LGBT people and to the general public, Entre Amigos has spoken out about the failure of authorities to investigate human rights violations against LGBT people in El Salvador. Although they have reported seven raids on their offices during the last five years, investigations have proved superficial and nobody has been brought to justice.

In light of these facts, **we strongly urge you to:**

- conduct a thorough, prompt and impartial investigation into the death threats against William Hernandez, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;
- take immediate measures to ensure the safety of the Asociación Entre Amigos staff, according to their wishes, and provide additional security measures for William Hernández;
- recognize the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, in accordance with United Nations agreements.

William Hernández was finally given police protection in February 2001 after we and other human rights organizations sent several letters on his behalf in response to death threats he received during 1999 and 2000. We expect that the authorities will increase their protection of Hernández and the other staff of Entre Amigos.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

Copies: H. Douglas Barclay, US Ambassador to El Salvador~ via fax
 René Antonio León Rodríguez, El Salvador Ambassador to the US ~ via fax
 Asociación Entre Amigos ~ via fax
 Dra. Beatrice Alamanni, Human Rights Procurator ~ via fax
 Paul Degler, El Salvador Desk at U.S. State Dept. ~ via fax
 Paolo Carozza US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights~ via fax
 Florentín Meléndez, El Salvador member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax
 US Senators DeWine & Voinovich ~ via email
 US Representatives Brown, Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

UA 211/06 El Salvador

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