

via fax: 011 504 237 9070 Coronel (R) Jorge Alberto Rodas Gamero Ministry of Security of Honduras	via fax: 011 504 221 5667 Licdo. Leonidas Rosa Buatista Attorney General of Honduras
--	---

September 15, 2008

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, write to express our grave concern for the safety of Public Prosecutor **Luis Javier Santos** and his family. At 5pm on September 1, as Luis Santos was driving away from his home in San Pedro Sula, Cortés Department, an unknown assailant opened fire on the car, shot him in the back, the abdomen and the arm, and then walked away from the scene. There was no attempt at robbery. As of September 5, Luis Santos was still in critical condition in a hospital intensive care unit. There are two soldiers and one police officer stationed outside his hospital room, and two intelligence officers monitor the surroundings. However, his relatives have not been consulted about the protection measures, and it is unclear whether the officers are properly trained to provide personal protection. His family is also concerned for their own safety, but no protection has been provided to them.

The attack is probably connected to his anti-corruption work. In his previous position as Regional Coordinator in the Anti-Corruption Section of the Public Prosecutor's Office, Santos had investigated a series of corruption cases involving municipal government administrations, eight of which led to officials being taken to court. One of these was the former mayor of San Pedro Sula, who was found guilty of embezzlement in January 2007. Local press reported that after hearing the verdict, the former mayor openly threatened to kill Luis Santos.

In August 2007, because of threats he had received, Luis Santos asked the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (ICHR) to order the Honduran government authorities to ensure his safety. The Honduran authorities provided him with a bodyguard between 8am and 4pm. In January 2008, Luis Santos wrote to the ICHR to advise them that the measures taken by the government were inadequate because he was most vulnerable outside these hours. He was not accompanied by his bodyguard when he was shot at 5pm on September 1.

In April and May of this year, Luis Santos, together with nine other Public Prosecutors, participated in a 38-day hunger strike calling for reform within the Public Prosecutor's Office, concerning the investigation of cases of corruption. A number of social, political, religious and human rights activists joined the protest, some of whom subsequently suffered death threats or attempts on their lives.

In light of these facts, we **strongly urge** that you

- ensure that immediate and effective measures are taken to guarantee the safety of Luis Santos and his family, in strict accordance with their wishes and for as long as is necessary to ensure their safety.
- order an immediate, thorough and swift investigation into the shooting of Luis Santos, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

cc: Comité de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos en Honduras (COFADEH) ~ via US mail
Sr. Angel Edmundo Orellana Mercado, Foreign Affairs Minister ~ via fax: 011.504.234.1484
Roberto Flores Bermudez, Honduran Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 011 202 966 9751
Charles A. Ford, US Ambassador to Honduras ~ via fax 011.504.236.9037
Marcos Mandojana, Honduras Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax : 202-647-2597
Paolo Carozza, US Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 1.202.458-3992/8215
US Senators Brown & Voinovich and US Representatives Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Regula, Ryan, Sutton ~ via email

UA 243/08Honduras

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