Honduras: Journalist opposing mining murdered

On the night of 26 November 2003, journalist Germán Antonio Rivas was shot and killed. He was the managing director of Corporación Maya Visión television station, which broadcasts from the western city of Santa Rosa de Copán, on the border with Guatemala. He was the director of the news program “CMV-Noticias,” known for its criticism of the installation of a mining operation within the Guisayote National Park in the department of Ocotepeque, questioning the activities of the mining company due to the impact they would have on the environment and the conservation of natural resources.

Rivas had survived an assassination attempt on 24 February and had received threatening anonymous telephone calls. He was convinced on that occasion that the attack and threatening were connected to his then station's reports on the ecological damage caused by the Minerales de Occidente (MINOSA) company, particularly on a cyanide spill in the Lara River, a tributary of the Higuito River, the source of drinking water for the city of Santa Rosa. "I don't dare to confirm [that I was targeted because of this coverage], but I don't discard the possibility. To say so would put my life and that of my family at grave risk," Rivas admitted.

In a similar case, Marisol Tábora, a member of the coalition of non-governmental organisations ASONOG, was threatened with legal action in early February for conducting research into the death of fish and other species following a cyanide spill near a mine in Copan's La Unión municipality.

The police have been silent regarding Rivas' assassination, allegedly because they have not found a motive for the journalist's murder. Is all the above not sufficient to at least consider the mining industry as a possible suspect?

Article based on information from: “Acción Urgente”, Comité de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos en Honduras (COFADEH), http://www.caritaspanama.org/accionsolidaria/accion_urgente_cofadeh.htm ; “Urgent Action. Journalist Assassinated in Honduras”, http://www.ourworldisnotforsale.org/action/17.htm