



Solidarity and friendship



"I want to thank the colleagues and members of the IFJ for the timely financial support which they gave me, when my husband, Jose Antonio Alvarez Pachas was unfairly imprisoned for exercising his profession.

This help enabled us to cover the costs of his imprisonment, during these hard times (to buy him food and equipment to work with), as well as to alleviate the family's financial situation which had been further weakened by the illness of my daughter.

Most of all, this assistance gave us the moral boost we needed and let us know that we were not alone and that we could count on your solidarity and friendship."

Rosa Neyra De Alvarez Peru

CAMBODIA

In March

1997, 22 journalists were injured in a hand grenade attack on a small political demonstration. The journalist who died was caught in the blast when two hand grenades landed in the crowd near to the spot where journalists were taking photographs and making notes. The demonstration was led by the head of the dissident Khmer Nation Party and had been authorised by the Ministry of Interior.

The journalists needed immediate help to pay for medical treatment. Two were pulled out of a public hospital, one had a perforated lung and one had a perforated spleen. They were transferred to a private clinic and one immediately had his spleen removed.

Three journalists needed surgery for fractures of the lower leg caused by shrapnel; one required evacuation to Malaysia for surgery to restore sight in one eye; three others needed abdominal surgery. While some of the journalists were helped by their employers who paid for evacuations and medical treatment, others, particularly those working for Cambodian-owned papers with limited resources, depended on the IFJ Safety Fund. These donations ensured that lives and limbs were saved.

GUATEMALA

One February

day in 1996, Vinicio Pacheco a journalist with Radio Sonora, was kidnapped and severely beaten by four armed assailants. He was kicked and punched in the face, seriously wounded on his feet and burnt with cigarettes on his chest. He was released three hours later and was found on a beach by Lake Amatitlan, near Guatemala City. Vinicio was hospitalised with injuries to the pelvis, legs, and the back of the neck. He was told during the attack that his would be the first name on a new blacklist of journalists.

He needed to leave Guatemala and fast. In March 1996 he asked for political asylum in Costa Rica.

Staff from the IFJ Guatemala office met Vinicio with members of the Costa Rican union. Through the IFJ Latin America office in Caracas Vinicio received help from the IFJ Safety Fund. The UN Refugee authorities in Costa Rica also gave

him assistance and the necessary moral support and human contact was provided by the Union of journalists in Costa Rica. While in exile Vinicio took part in training programmes in Costa Rica.

After 6 months he chose to return to Guatemala and continue his work as a journalist.

No one has ever been prosecuted for the merciless attack on Vinicio, but today he lives and works back in his own country determined not to be intimidated by his assailants. Vinicio's courage cannot be underestimated. But he was fortunate. The IFJ Safety Fund was there when he needed it.