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17 August 2004

HND42890.E

Honduras: Update to HND34286.E of 20 April 2000 on rivalry and violence between the National Party and the Liberal Party, and specifically whether National Party members have been killed by the Liberal Party members (2000 to August 2004)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

No reports of rivalry or violence between the Liberal and National parties in 2002, 2003 or 2004 could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

In 2001, *Central America Report* stated that political rivalry between the parties was plaguing both the Congress and the National Electoral Tribunal (TNE) (2 Mar. 2001). In Congress, the Liberal Party refused to discuss a bill on congressional reform introduced by the National Party; the incident "spark[ed]... protests from the nationalists, who threw their documents in the air and stormed out of the legislative session" (CAR 2 Mar. 2001). In the TNE, Liberal TNE officials refused to register the National Party's Ricardo Maduro as a candidate for the presidency (ibid.). The National Party appealed to the Supreme Court to block the Liberal Party's attempts to forbid Maduro from running for the presidency (ibid.). National Party officials of the TNE tried to keep David Matamoros from taking his turn as director of the tribunal, despite the schedule for rotation of the position, which is set according to the TNE constitution (ibid.).

Several sources reported the arrest of three Liberal Party members in connection with the murder of National Party congressional candidate, Angel Pacheco, the day before elections in November 2001 (AFP 24 Nov. 2001; BBC 26 Nov. 2001; Freedom House 13 June 2003; *The Independent* 26 Nov. 2001). While police stated that the incident appeared politically motivated (BBC 26 Nov. 2001; *The Independent* 26 Nov. 2001), Ricardo Maduro, the National Party elected president, stated that Pacheco's murder was not connected to his political affiliation (*Diario Tiempo* 25 Nov. 2001; *Latinamerica Press* 29 Nov. 2001). Angel Pacheco had been running for a congressional seat in the department of Valle at the time of his death (ACAN-EFE 24 Nov. 2001a; *Weekly News Update on the Americas* 25 Nov. 2001).

In December 2001, the judge in charge of investigating Pacheco's murder, Teodoro Bonilla, stepped down from the case following death threats he received allegedly from family members of two prisoners, Héctor Estrada and Alberto Chirinos, who had been detained in connection with Pacheco's killing (*Diario Tiempo* 19 Dec. 2001). According to *Country Reports 2003*, by the end of 2003 there were no suspects in custody in connection with Pacheco's murder (25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 1a).

In addition to Pacheco, two other candidates were murdered during the election campaign in 2001 (AFP 25 Nov. 2001). No additional information on these two murders could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Also in the context of the 2001 elections, ACAN-EFE reported that the headquarters of the Liberal Party in San Pedro Sula had been subjected to gunfire on the eve of the election (24 Nov. 2001b). The report added that no one was hurt in the incident and that no arrests had been made (ACAN-EFE 24 Nov. 2001b).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Internet sites, including: Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, *La Nación*, *Honduras Revista Internacional*, *Honduras This Week*, *La Prensa*, *La Tribuna*.

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