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Subject: bruce harris  
Reply-to: media@casa-alianza.org  
CC: BRUCE@mercurio.racsa.co.cr, ANALARA@mercurio.racsa.co.cr  
Priority: urgent

Estimada Maria Eugenia,

Aqui les hacemos llegar un documento en el que viene un poco la biografia y el trabajo desarrollado por Bruce Harris, solo en caso de que sigan interesados en mandar la nominacion a lo de Forum98. Este documento estaria listo para ser mandado, y no requeriria de mas modificacion, a no ser que ustedes quieran añadir algo mas.

Saludos

Ann Birch  
Casa Alianza  
Oficina Regional

NOMINATION OF MR BRUCE HARRIS

1. NAME OF PERSON NOMINATED:

Mr Bruce Harris

2. ADDRESS OF NOMINEE (INCLUDING TELEPHONE AND FAX NUMBER):

PO Box 1734  
2050 San Pedro,  
San Jose,  
Costa Rica, Central America

Tel: (506) 253 5439  
Fax: (506) 224 5689  
E-mail: <bruce@casa-alianza.org>

3. BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF NOMINEE (COUNTRY OF ORIGIN, DATE OF BIRTH, PROFESSION/PRIMARY FIELD OF ACTIVITY):

Mr Harris was born on April 12th, 1955 in Newbury, Berkshire, in the United Kingdom. He earned a Bachelors degree in International Studies from the School for International Training in Vermont, USA, and a Masters degree in International Management from the American Graduate School of International Management in Arizona, USA, where he graduated with the Barton Kyle Yount Student of the Year award.

>From 1985 to 1989, he worked for the Save the Children Federation as their Bolivian Field Office Director - a role he performed so successfully that he was decorated by the Bolivian Government with the nation's second highest civilian award.

In 1989, Mr Harris was appointed as Executive Director of Casa Alianza, an independent and non-profit making childcare agency which works to defend and rehabilitate street children in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Mexico. Casa Alianza is the Latin American branch of the New York based Covenant House, the largest provider for homeless and abandoned children in the Americas.

In 1991, Mr Harris was recognised as a "Human Rights Hero" by Amnesty International and in 1997 he and Casa Alianza were awarded the prestigious Olof Palme Prize - one of Sweden's highest honours - for their "courageous defence" of street children.

Mr Harris is married and has two young children. He and his family are currently living in Costa Rica after an assassination attempt against him by the Guatemalan security forces.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE NOMINEE TO THE CAUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS WHICH HAS PROMPTED YOUR NOMINATION:

The Consortium for Street Children UK is nominating Mr Bruce Harris for his nine year long campaign to protect street children in Guatemala.

When Mr Harris first started work in Guatemala in 1989, the torture and murder of street children was often ignored - and sometimes even committed - by National Police officers. Suspected crimes against street children only rarely came before the courts.

Nine years on, over 380 cases are pending, many of them based on evidence gathered by Mr Harris and his team of outreach workers. Even the National Police are no longer sure of their impunity, after Mr Harris made legal history by bringing a number of officers to justice.

In 1992, Mr Harris and Casa Alianza won the conviction of four National Police officers for the brutal murder of Nahaman Carmona Lopeza. Nahaman, a 13 year old street boy, was kicked to death. His killers were only the second public officials in Guatemalan legal history to be found guilty of human rights abuses.

In 1997, Mr Harris won a landmark decision from the Inter American Commission on Human Rights in Washington, USA, over allegations that two National Police officers had tortured and murdered five street children. After a two and half year campaign by Mr Harris, the Commission finally referred the case to the Inter American Court on Human Rights in San Jose, Costa Rica. This was the very first time that the Court had ever been sent a case involving violations of children's rights. Mr Harris' allegations had previously been dismissed by a succession of Guatemalan courts.

Mr Harris' work has involved great personal risk. He has braved death threats and was eventually forced to leave Guatemala after the drive-by shooting of a Casa Alianza shelter. He is currently facing imprisonment because he dared to release evidence which suggests that scores of influential Guatemalan legal figures are involved in the illegal - but highly lucrative - international trade in babies. One of these figures, the wife of a Supreme Court Magistrate, responded by launching a defamation action which could put Mr Harris in jail.

Under Guatemalan law, truth is not an adequate defence in defamation cases, even though the right to free speech is nominally protected by both the constitution and international law. Furthermore, defamatin is treated not as a civil offence (as in international law) but as a criminal one. If convicted, Mr Harris could face a five year prison sentence and an unwelcome reunion with the many child killers, including former National Police officers, whom he helped put behind bars.

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