

THE MONSIGNOR OSCAR ROMERO AWARD
FOR LEADERSHIP IN SERVICE TO HUMAN RIGHTS



**Bruce Harris, Executive Director
Latin America Programs, Casa Alianza
2001 Recipient
Monsignor Oscar Romero Award for Leadership
in Service to Human Rights**

Bruce Harris is an internationally known child care advocate. Born in the United Kingdom in 1955, Mr. Harris received his university education in the United States, earning a bachelor's degree in international studies from the School for International Training in Vermont, and a master's degree in international management from the American Graduate School of International Management in Arizona.

Since 1989, Mr. Harris has been the Executive Director of Latin America programs for Casa Alianza/Covenant House Latin America, one of the Americas' largest child care agencies. Mr. Harris oversees and directs the operations of Casa Alianza located in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Mexico. Like their counterparts in North America, these Covenant House facilities provide food, shelter, medical care, counseling, education, skill training and other services to thousands of homeless youngsters who are often abandoned to a life of survival on the streets. Under the leadership of Mr. Harris, Casa Alianza has mobilized citizens worldwide against the torture and murder of street children by uniformed authorities in Guatemala, and the illegal detention of Honduran children, some as young as 10 years old, in the same cells as hardened adult criminals, where they are beaten, raped, and sometimes tortured.

Mr. Harris personally led the campaign in Guatemala to bring a halt to the murder and torture of local street children. By the end of 1990 more than 40 judicial cases were initiated against police officers and others in Guatemala suspected of committing these and other offenses against street kids. That number increased to 392 by 1998. Much of the evidence that make the prosecutions possible was gathered by Mr. Harris and his team of outreach workers.

In 1991, Mr. Harris was named "Human Rights Hero" by Amnesty International after Casa Alianza won the

conviction of four Guatemalan National Police officers who kicked to death Nahaman Carmona Lopez, a 13-year-old street boy. It was only the second time in Guatemalan history that public officials were convicted for human rights violations. Following that successful prosecution, Mr. Harris was forced to leave Guatemala because of death threats and a drive-by shooting of a Casa Alianza shelter.

In 1997, Mr. Harris accepted the Olof Palme Award on behalf of Casa Alianza in Stockholm, Sweden, on the birthday of the slain prime minister, peace advocate and champion of the world's poor. The Olof Palme Award, one of Sweden's highest honors, was awarded to Casa Alianza for its "dedicated work to help street children in Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico to start a meaningful life." Mr. Harris was recognized for his "courageous defense of the rights of these children."

Mr. Harris' work has captured the attention of the world's media. He has been profiled on ABC News, *Prime Time Live*, NBC's *Dateline* and the BBC's *Man Alive* documentary series, among other TV programs. Most recently, Mr. Harris was featured on the HBO documentary special, "Innocents Lost," about child abuse and exploitation around the world.

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