

UA 23/01

Fear for

GUATEMALA Juan Carlos Aquino (journalist)
Marvin Alfredo Herwin González (journalist)

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of two journalists, who have received death threats as part of what appears to be an ongoing campaign of harassment and intimidation.

In recent months, Juan Carlos Aquino and Marvin Alfredo Herwin González have reportedly received a number of telephone death threats at the radio station where they work in the department of Zacapa. One caller said they would be murdered unless they stop criticizing the authorities in their news reports. They have also been followed by unmarked cars when leaving the radio station.

The harassment began in September 2000 when unknown armed men fired three shots at Juan Carlos Aquino as he was leaving the radio station. However, he escaped uninjured.

The two journalists have reported all these incidents to the authorities and have requested police protection on a number of occasions when going home from the radio station. So far, investigations have not led to the arrest of those responsible for the harassment.

Juan Carlos Aquino and Marvin Alfredo Herwin González are in charge of the daily news service at *Radio Novedad*, a local radio station in Zapaca. At times, their news bulletins have been critical of the authorities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Throughout 2000, a number of Guatemalan journalists were harassed and received death threats, in particular those who had been outspoken in their criticism of the authorities (see UA 212/00, AMR 34/30/00, 13 July 2000 and UA 142/00, AMR 34/18/00, 31 May 2000). Amnesty International fears that these threats may be part of a strategy by the authorities to create an atmosphere of insecurity and terror amongst those who campaign for the freedom of expression and human rights in Guatemala.

Such threats take place to the background of escalating tension. Last year, human rights defenders in Guatemala were increasingly the target of threats, and the Guatemalan authorities did nothing to effectively investigate or prevent such harassment.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Spanish or your own language:

- urging the authorities to take immediate and effective measures to guarantee the safety of journalists Juan Carlos Aquino and Marvin Alfredo Herwin González;
- calling for an immediate and thorough investigation into the reported threats against the journalists, including the shooting incident, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- expressing concern for the safety of all those working to protect human rights and the freedom of expression, particularly those who have suffered recent threats or intimidation.

APPEALS TO: (Please note that it can be difficult getting through to some of these fax numbers. Please be patient and keep trying. If a voice answers say: "fax por favor" and wait for the signal)

Minister of the Interior

Sr. Byron Barrientos
Ministro de Gobernación
Ministerio de Gobernación
6ª Avenida 4-64, Zona 4
Ciudad de Guatemala , GUATEMALA
Telegram: Ministro Gobernacion, Guatemala, Guatemala
Fax: + 502 362 0239/ 362 0237
Salutation: Dear Minister / Estimado Señor Ministro

Attorney General

Lic. Adolfo González Rodas
Fiscal General de la República
Ministerio Público
8a. Avenida 10-67
Zona 1, Tercer nivel
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Telegram: Fiscal General, Guatemala, Guatemala
Fax: + 502 221 2718
Salutation: Dear Attorney General / Estimado Señor Fiscal General

Minister of Communications Transport and Public Works

Lic. Luis Rabbé
Ministro de Comunicaciones Transportes e Infraestructura
Ministerio de Comunicaciones Transportes y Obras Públicas
8ª Avenida y 15 Calle, Zona 3
Ciudad de Guatemala , GUATEMALA
Fax : +502 362 6066
Salutation: Dear Minister/ Estimado Señor Ministro

COPIES TO:

Radio Station

Radio Novedad
Zacapa, GUATEMALA
Fax: +502 941 0392

News service

CERIGUA
2a calle 1-42, Zona 1
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Tel/Fax: + 502 238 1456/ 221 2521
E-mail: cerigua@guate.net

Newspaper

Diario "Prensa Libre"
13 Calle 9-31, Zona 1,
Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Fax: + 502 251 8768
E-mail: webmaster@prensalibre.com.gt

and to diplomatic representatives of GUATEMALA accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 13 March 2001.