

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 34/004/2005

10 January 2005

UA 06/05

Fear for safety

GUATEMALA

**Makrina Gudiel Álvarez (f)**  
**Agripina Álvarez (f)**  
**Carlos Ernesto Cruz Gudiel (f)**  
**Óscar Cruz Gudiel (m),**  
**José Gabriel Cruz Gudiel (m)**

---

The mayor of a town in southern Guatemala, Florentín Gudiel, was murdered on 20 December 2004. He had been campaigning against corruption and also for justice for his son, who "disappeared" in 1983, while the country was under military rule. Since he was killed his family have received numerous death threats, and Amnesty International believes they are in grave danger, particularly his daughter Makrina Gudiel Álvarez, a local councillor who had also been fighting corruption.

Florentín Gudiel was the mayor of Cruce de la Esperanza, about 80km southeast of Guatemala City, in the municipality of Santa Lucia Coztumalguapa, department of Escuintla. According to witnesses a pick-up truck with tinted windows and two men on a bicycle had been circling his home in the town, and forced him to stop 300 metres from his house, as he was cycling home. The men in the pick-up truck shot Florentin Gudiel in the back, throwing him off his bicycle. They got out and shot him twice in the head, at close range. According to a police officer on the scene they used 9mm hollowpoint bullets. Nothing was stolen, which indicates that this was an assassination rather than a robbery.

At 9pm that day, during the wake for Florentín Gudiel, what appeared to be a military patrol led by a *kaibil*, or special forces officer, came to his house in an unmarked car and positioned themselves as if they were going to storm the house, which terrified the people inside. They did not actually storm the house, and left shortly after this act of intimidation. During the traditional nine days of mourning, people who came to pray at the family home received spoken threats via third parties that *sufriran la misma suerte*, they would suffer the same fate. A red car with armed men wearing shirts with insignia of the rightwing former ruling party, the *Frente Republicano Guatemalteco*, Guatemalan Republican Front, stopped outside the family home at various times. Makrina Gudiel Álvarez received a number of spoken threats via third parties indicating she is also the target of assassination and to flee.

Makrina Gudiel works for the local council of Santa Lucia Cotzumalguapa. Like her father, she is a member of the former guerrilla group, now a political party, the *Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca* (URNG), Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity. She has received several death threats over the past two years, but these have suddenly intensified since her father was killed. In November 2003 she received a phone call from a former *Kaibil*, who threatened to kill her, her son and her father. A few days earlier this man had lost the presidency of the local education board to Florentín Gudiel, in large part because Gudiel had accused him of embezzlement. Makrina Gudiel registered a complaint with the local *Ministerio Publico* (District Attorney's Office), but they took no action. In December 2003 another man, via third parties, threatened to kill her. Throughout 2004 she had been having problems at the local council because she was making public allegations pointing to embezzlement by council staff. On 17 November 2004 armed men in balaclavas came to her home, but left when they found she was not there. Three weeks later her father was killed.

Florentín Gudiel had been commended by the United Nations for his community work. He was also pushing for justice for his son, José Miguel Gudiel Álvarez, who "disappeared" in 1983. His name appeared in the

"Death Squad Dossier", a log book of 183 "disappearances" carried out by the Guatemalan Army in the mid-1980s which was made public in May 1999.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

There has been an alarming increase in human rights violations in Guatemala in the past few years. Amnesty International is concerned that attacks on local officials investigating acts of corruption, human rights defenders and others involved in human rights issues cases may be part of a systematic campaign to silence those who have spoken out against impunity for human rights abuses, particularly those that took place under the military government of 1980-1983. Serving and ex-military personnel, some of whom have been implicated in these human rights abuses, are widely suspected of belonging to criminal networks that have enormous influence in both the government and the army.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish, English or your own language:**

- expressing grave concern for the safety of the Gudiel family, and calling on the authorities to provide them with full protection and order an investigation into the threats and acts of intimidation they have suffered, with those responsible brought to justice.
- calling for a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the death of Florentín Gudiel, with the results made public and those found responsible brought to justice;
- calling for a full investigation into illegal armed groups operating in the area of Escuintla.
- urging the authorities to take immediate measures to end the intimidation of public officials, so that they can carry out their duties without fear of intimidation.

#### **APPEALS TO: (if a voice answers a fax number, ask 'me puede dar el tono de fax, por favor')**

##### Governor of Escuintla

Luis Alberto Muñoz González

Gobernación Departamental, 9 calle 3-40 zona 1, Escuintla, GUATEMALA.

**Fax: +502 7888 0225**

**Salutation: Estimado Gobernador /Dear Governor**

##### District Attorney

Lic. Freedyn Valdemar Fernandez Ortiz

Fiscalía Distrital, 2a Calle 3-55, Zona 1, Santa Lucía Cotzumalguapa, Escuintla, GUATEMALA

**Fax: +502 78825482**

**Salutation: Estimado Fiscal Distrital/Dear District Attorney**

#### **COPIES TO:**

##### Minister of the Interior

Carlos Vielman

Ministerio de Gobernación, 6a.Avenida 4-64, zona 4, nivel 3.Ciudad de Guatemala. GUATEMALA

**Fax: +502 2362-02 37**

**Email: ministro@mingob.gob.gt**

##### Makrina Gudiel

Municipalidad de Santa Lucía Cotzumalguapa,

5 calle entre 3 y 4 avenida, zona 1, Sta Lucía Cotzumalguapa, Ecuintla GUATEMALA

**Fax: +502 7882 5443**

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 23 February 2005.