

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 34/12/98

10 February 1998

Further information on EXTRA 101/97 (AMR 34/28/97, 15 July 1997) and follow-ups (AMR 34/34/97, 4 September 1997, AMR 34/38/97, 19 November 1997, AMR 34/39/97, 20 November 1997, AMR 34/10/98, 6 February 1998) - Death Penalty

GUATEMALA Manuel Martínez Coronado

Manuel Martínez Coronado was legally executed by lethal injection at 6AM (12:00 GMT) on 10 February 1998, after the Constitutional Court rejected a last minute appeal that the Guatemalan Supreme Court had violated international law.

A Guatemalan Human Rights organization had contended that the Supreme Court was not the correct body to deal with the request from the Interamerican Commission on Human Rights for the execution to be suspended until it had time to consider whether proceedings against Manuel Martínez Coronado had violated the American Convention on Human Rights. This is the second occasion the Commission's request for such measures has been ignored by the Guatemalan authorities.

Manuel Martínez Coronado convicted of the multiple homicide of seven members of a family in the Guatemalan department of Chiquimula is the first Guatemalan to be executed by lethal injection, following the adoption by the Guatemalan Congress of decree 100/96 in October 1996, making this the method of execution in Guatemala.

According to an eye witness Manuel Martínez Coronado took 18 minutes to die; he was formally pronounced dead by a forensic surgeon 24 minutes after receiving the lethal injection. This contradicts repeated claims by the Guatemalan authorities and press that lethal injection is speedier and more humane than any other form of execution, resulting in the death of the condemned person in "30 seconds"

Amnesty International is concerned that the proceedings which led to his conviction fall short of acceptable standards of due process.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/E-mails/express/airmail letters in Spanish or in your own language:

- reiterating Amnesty International's opposition to the death penalty in all cases, as the ultimate, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and a violation of the right to life as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and urging that any future death sentences be commuted;
- regretting Guatemala's failure to respond to the request of the IACHR that the execution be suspended until it had had time to determine whether the Inter-American convention had been breached, and that this lack of response from Guatemala weakens the Inter-American system of human rights protection;
- pointing out that Guatemala is out of step with abolitionist tendencies throughout the world and with Latin America's traditional and much-admired long-term stance against the death penalty;
- pointing out that medical research in the USA has shown that death by lethal injection can be prolonged, as it was in this case, and painful, and that the participation of doctors or other medical personnel is contrary to the position taken by the World Medical Association against the participation of doctors in any form of execution, at any stage;
- stressing that all available research indicates that the death penalty does not serve as a deterrent to crime.

APPEALS TO:President

S.E. Álvaro Arzú Irigoyen
 Presidente de la República de Guatemala
 Palacio Nacional, 6ª Calle y 7ª Avenida, Zona 1
 Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegrams: Presidente, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Faxes: + 502 221 4537 / 230 1502

E-mails: <alvaroarzu@guate.net>

Salutation: Sr. Presidente / Dear President

Procurator General

Lic. Acisclo Valladares Molina
 Procurador General de la Nación, Procuraduría General de la Nación
 15 Avenida 9-69, Zona 13, Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegrams: Procurador General, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Faxes: + 502 334 8465

Salutation: Sr. Procurador / Dear Procurator General

Vice-Minister of the Interior

Sr. Salvador Gándara
 Viceministro de Gobernación, Ministerio de Gobernación
 Despacho Ministerial, Of. N° 8, Palacio Nacional
 6ª Calle y 7ª Avenida, Zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegrams: Viceministro de Gobernación, Guatemala, Guatemala

Faxes: + 502 251 5368

Salutation: Sr. Viceministro / Dear Vice-Minister

COPIES TO:Director, Forensic Medical Service

Dr. Mario René Guerra
 Director, Servicio Médico Forense del Organismo Judicial
 Avenida del Cementerio 18-26, Zona 3
 Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala
 Phone: +502 230 4206

Note: Dr. Mario René Guerra was the consultant responsible for advising the government on the exact chemical mixture to be used in lethal injection executions in Guatemala

President of the Guatemalan Medical Association

Colegio de Médicos y Cirujanos de Guatemala
 0 calle 15-46, Zona 15, Colonia El Maestro, 5º nivel
 Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: + 502 369 3684

Judge Juan Fernando Godínez

Juzgado 1º de Ejecución Penal, Torre de Tribunales, 7 Av 21 C, Zona 1, Centro Cívico, Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Note: Juan Fernández Godínez was the judge who presided over Manuel Martínez' execution, despite the fact that he has been quoted as saying that he is a life-long opponent of the death penalty and does not believe it will solve Guatemala's crime problems.

Lawyer

Lic. Rubén de la Rosa, Defensoría Pública, Ave Simeón Cañas N° 4-30, zona 2
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Tel/faxes: + 502 230 4328 / 4146

Press

Diario "Prensa Libre"

13 Calle 9-31, Edificio Prensa Libre. Zona 1, Zona 1, Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Faxes: + 502 251 8768

Diario "La Hora"

9a Calle "A" 1-56 Zona 1, Apto Postal 1593(01001), Guatemala, C.A.
Faxes: + 502 251 7084
E-mails: <lahora@tikal.net.gt>

Diario "El Periódico"

15 Ave 24-51, Zona 13, Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Faxes: + 502 332 9761
E-mails: <periodic@gold.guate.net>

Diario "El Día"

Avenida reforma 6-64, zona 9, Plaza Corporativa Torre 2, Nivel 2, Oficina 203,
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Faxes: + 502 339 1276

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 6 March 1998.