

PUBLIC

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UA 117/07 Fear for safety

GUATEMALA Male member of staff of *Consejería en Proyectos*, Project Counselling Service (PCS)
Other PCS staff

A male member of staff at the international donor agency *Consejería en Proyectos*, Project Counselling Service (PCS) received a death threat on 17 May after being reportedly abducted, beaten, robbed and sexually assaulted on 7 May. Amnesty International believes that his life and those of his colleagues may be in danger.

PCS is an international consortium of European and Canadian agencies which funds work in Latin America, mainly with refugees and internally displaced people, in countries that are in or recovering from conflict.

At 1.30pm on 7 May, as the PCS staff member was parking the organization's pick-up truck in a suburban area of Guatemala City, two men in their mid-20s had approached him, put their guns to his head, and told him to move to the back of the pick-up truck and lie down on the floor. One of the men drove the pick-up truck and the other one sat in the back and began to hit the PCS staff member with the butt of his gun, asking him to hand over his money and his gun. He said he did not carry a gun, and that the money was in his backpack, in the cab of the pick-up truck, but they could not bother to check. The man in the back then took down the PCS staff member's trousers and put the gun to his head, to his back and then to his anus. After about 15 minutes they released him in another part of the city, taking away nearly all his money, his mobile phone and the vehicle. The attack was reported to the national police and the Human Rights Ombudsman. In the evening of 16 May, Ministry of Interior officials in communication with PCS staff indicated that an investigation was beginning.

At approximately 6.45am on 17 May he received a call on his home phone. A male voice, which seemed to be electronically distorted, said, "*Hijo de puta, no fue suficiente.... Te dijimos que no hicieras nada. No entiendes verdad. Les vamos a quebrar el culo a vos y a todas las huecas y putas de tu oficina. Sabemos quienes son y que hacen. No chingueen y dejen las cosas como están.*" ("Son of a bitch, wasn't it enough... We told you not to do anything. Don't you understand? We're going to kill you and all those dykes and bitches in your office. We know who you are and what you do. Don't fuck around and leave things as they are.")

At the time of the assault, the PCS staff member had been collecting materials for an international NGO conference opening on 7 May on the consequences for the victims of sexual violence against women during the internal armed conflict in Guatemala (1960-1996). Through local partners such as Community Studies and Psycho-social Action Team (*Equipo de Estudios Comunitarios y Acción Psicosocial*, ECAP) and the Institute for Comparative Studies in Criminal Sciences of Guatemala (*Instituto de Estudios Comparados en Ciencias Penales de Guatemala*, ICCPG), PCS has been actively involved in supporting women who were raped during the internal armed conflict and, since the conflict ended, in police stations.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A number of the Guatemalan organizations funded by PCS have been attacked since July 2006. PCS is a board member of the Forum of International NGOs (*Foro de ONG Internacionales*, FONGI) in Guatemala and at least three of its partners reported break-ins at their offices in early April. Local human rights organizations have recorded an 18 per cent rise in the number of attacks against human rights defenders in Guatemala in the first four months of this year, compared to the same period of 2006.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of staff at *Consejería en Proyectos* (Project Counselling Service, PCS);
- calling on the authorities to order a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation into the threats, sexual assault and robbery of a PCS staff member on 7 May, and bring those responsible to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate and effective measures to guarantee the safety of all the human rights defenders working for PCS, according to their wishes;
- reminding the authorities that human rights defenders have the right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms;
- calling on the authorities to develop a national plan of action to implement this UN Declaration, so as to ensure that human rights defenders are able to carry out their legitimate work without fear of reprisals.

APPEALS TO:

Attorney General and Head of the Public Prosecutor's office

Lic. Juan Luís Florido

Fiscal General de la República y Jefe del Ministerio Público

Edificio Ministerio Público

15 Avenida 15-16, Zona 1, Barrio Gerona, 8vo. Nivel,

Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax: +502 2411 9124

+502 2411 9326

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Estimado Sr. Fiscal General

Minister of Interior

Adela Camacho de Torrebiarte

Ministra de Gobernación

6a. Avenida 13-71, Zona 1,

Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax: +502 2413 8658

Salutation: Dear Minister/Estimada Sra. Ministra

COPIES TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Gert Rosenthal Koenigsberger

Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores

Avenida La Reforma 4-47, Zona 10

Ciudad de Guatemala 01010, Guatemala

Fax: +502 2410 0071

Project Counselling Service / Consejería en Proyectos (PCS)

Avenida Reforma 8-60, Zona 9, Edificio Galerías Reforma, Of. 514

Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax: +502 2332 7368

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 29 June 2007.