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GUATEMALA

Street Youths Francisco Tziac Soc and Julio César Reyes

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Amnesty International is concerned at two recent incidents involving street youths, in which street youth Francisco Tziac Soc, aged 18, was shot by two *Comisionados Militares* (Military Commissioners), civilian agents of the armed forces, on 22 April 1993, and Julio César Reyes, aged 15, ill-treated by men he recognized as policemen on 14 March 1993. Both incidents took place in Zone 1 of Guatemala City.

On 22 April Francisco Tziac was outside the refuge for boys run by to Covenant House (*Casa Alianza*), an organization which works with street children in Guatemala. At approximately 10.15 a yellow Toyota mini-bus pulled up in front of the refuge and two men got out to buy food from a nearby street stall. At that moment Francisco Tziac reportedly attempted to steal the side-mirror from the vehicle, but the men saw what he was doing and started to chase him. The security guard for Covenant House along with one of the street educators witnessed one of the men pull a gun from his waist and saw him fire at Francisco Tziac, who fell wounded to the ground. Seeing Francisco Tziac on the ground the two men went to find a telephone, during which time the street youth managed to flee. The two men reportedly identified themselves as military commissioners, who stated that they were going to report the incident to the National Police.

Francisco Tziac was admitted to the emergency unit of San Juan de Dios Hospital in Guatemala City, with a bullet wound to his left buttock. Following his admission, members of the *Departamento de Investigaciones Criminológicas* (DIC), Criminal Investigations Department of the National Police visited both Covenant House and the hospital, looking for Francisco Tziac.

Although Amnesty International recognizes the law-enforcement duties of the security forces, it is deeply concerned at what it considers an excessive use of force by security force personnel, in opening fire on the youth, in violation of international standards on the use of firearms by law enforcement officials.

On 14 March 1993, Julio César Reyes along with another street youth were on their way to attend the Anniversary Mass for Nahamán Carmona López, who was killed by six agents of the National Police on 14 March 1990. (See Guatemala: Children in Fear, AI Index: AMR 34/24/92 of May 1992 and Guatemala: Extrajudicial Executions & Human Rights Violations against Street Children, AMR 34/37/90, of August 1990) Julio Reyes and his friend were approached in Zone 1 of Guatemala City by two men who asked them for their identification papers. Julio Reyes recognized them as policemen. When the youths were unable to produce their identification papers, the policemen proceeded to arrest them and began taking them in the direction of the National Police headquarters. The youths resisted and one of the policemen who was smoking a cigarette began burning Julio Reyes on his left arm and fingers - he received 29 burns in total, 21 to his lower arm and one on each of his fingers. Julio Reyes initially sought treatment at the Emergency Unit of the Roosevelt Hospital in Guatemala City, but left when hospital staff tried to admit him. He subsequently left the country and sought refuge with the Covenant House programme in neighbouring Honduras. He is reportedly afraid to return to Guatemala for fear of reprisals.

BACKGROUND

Charitable agencies in Guatemala estimate that more than 5,000 children live on the streets of the capital, Guatemala City. Since Covenant House began denouncing human rights violations against Guatemalan street children over two years ago, Amnesty International has received continuing reports of human rights violations against them, including beatings, torture, "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions, carried out both by official security force agents, particularly the police, acting sometimes in plain clothes and sometimes in uniform, as well as by private security personnel licensed by the National Police and the Ministry of the Interior. (See Guatemala: Extrajudicial Executions and Human Rights Violations against Street Children, AMR 34/37/90 of August 1990, and Guatemala: Children in Fear, AMR 34/24/92 of May 1992, for documentation on many of these cases).

On 17 April 1993 street youth Henry Yubani Álvarez Benítez, believed to be around 17 years old, was shot reportedly by a security guard as he was walking with another street youth in Zone 1 of Guatemala City. He was killed instantly. (See UA 120/93, AMR 34/18/93 of 21 April 1993).

INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT, 1 EASTON STREET, LONDON WC1X 8DJ, UNITED KINGDOM
