

EXTERNAL

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Fear for safety

1 August 1997

GUATEMALA Felipa Aju (f)
Senayda Cana Chanay (f)
Emeterio Gómez

Human rights activists working to clarify past human rights violations continue to be the target of an alarming incidence of threats and harassment by former members of civil defence patrols, former military commissioners and members of the army.

On 6 July 1997, several armed men fired shots at the house of Felipa Aju, a member of *Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo por el Aparecimiento con Vida de Nuestros Familiares* (GAM), the Mutual Support Group for the Appearance of Our Relatives Alive. They left a note warning her to stop her work with the GAM within 13 days or she and two other members of GAM, Senayda Cana Chanay and Emeterio Gómez, would be killed. The note was signed, "Hombres Maleantes" (Wicked Men), a previously unknown designation.

In February 1995 Senayda Cana Chanay was shot and seriously injured as she was leaving her home in the village of Parajo, Buena Esperanza, municipality of San Martín Jilotepeque. The day before the shooting, she had been followed by a man known in the community to be a member of the G-2 military intelligence unit attached to the Chimaltenango military base.

The three people named above are involved in documenting cases of human rights violations for submission to the *Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico*, the Historical Clarification Commission. Formation of the Commission was agreed under the Peace Accords and began operation on 31 July. It was mandated to "clarify with complete objectivity, equity and impartiality the human rights violations and acts of violence which caused suffering to the Guatemalan people, in the context of the armed conflict." It is thought this latest threat to Felipa Aju, Senayda Cana Chanay and Emeterio Gómez is linked to their documentation work.

A request for protection (*recurso de protección personal*) has been made to the court in San Martín Jilotepeque and the Supreme Court. The three women are currently under protection of members of Peace Brigades International and the United Nations Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This latest incident follows a series of death threats against relatives of victims of army massacres and members of human rights groups involved in exhumations. Tens of thousands of non-combatant civilians, many of them indigenous peasants, were extrajudicially executed during army counter-insurgency campaigns in the Guatemalan countryside in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In recent years, human rights groups have been struggling to have the remains of the victims exhumed from the mass clandestine graves in which they were buried, in order to return their bodies to their families for formal burial. In no case known to AI have the authorities actively attempted to collect evidence from the mass burial sites that could assist in identifying those responsible for the mass killings and bringing them to justice.

Amnesty International has also received reports of death threats against members of the *Comité de Unidad Campesina* (CUC), Committee of Peasant Unity, and the *Coordinadora Nacional de Viudas de Guatemala National* (CONAVIGUA), Coordination of Widows of Guatemala, who have been gathering information regarding a clandestine cemetery in San Andrés Sajcabajá, department of El Quiché. In this case they are allegedly being threatened by an ex-military commissioner accused of human rights violations that took place between 1981 and 1982.

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

- expressing concern at the death threat against GAM members, Felipa Aju, Senayda Cana Chanay and Emeterio Gomez;
- calling for immediate measures to guarantee their safety;
- asking that the incident which took place on 6 July be immediately and thoroughly investigated and that those responsible be brought to justice;

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic
 S.E. Álvaro Arzú Irigoyen
 Presidente de la República de Guatemala
 Palacio Nacional
 6ª Calle y 7ª Avenida, Zona 1
 Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Telegrams: Presidente, Guatemala, Guatemala
Fax: +502 221 4537
E-mail: AlvaroArzu@guate.net
Salutation: Sr Presidente / Dear President

Attorney General
 Lic. Héctor Hugo Pérez Aguilera
 Fiscal General de la Nación
 Ministerio Público
 6ª Avenida 3-11, Zona 4
 Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Telegrams: Fiscal General, Guatemala, Guatemala
Salutation: Señor Fiscal / Dear Attorney General

If fax numbers are answered in person please ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor"

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Procurator
 Lic. Jorge Mario García Laguardia
 Procurador de los Derechos Humanos
 Procuraduría de los Derechos Humanos
 12 Avenida 12-72, Zona 1
 Guatemala, GUATEMALA
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Head of the Presidential Coordinating Committee of the Policies of the Executive relating to Human Rights
 Licda. Marta Altolaquirre
 Comisión Presidencial Coordinadora de la Política del Ejecutivo en Materia de Derechos Humanos (COPREDEH)

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GAM

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GUATEMALA

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 12 September 1997.