

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/death threats

01 September 2006

GUATEMALA

Vinicio Aguilar Mancilla (m)
Oscar Rodolfo Castañeda (m)

] Radio presenter
] at the *Radio 10* radio station

Other members of staff of the *Radio 10* radio station

Radio presenter Vinicio Aguilar Mancilla has been shot and his colleague Oscar Rodolfo Castañeda threatened in what appears to be an attempt to restrict their freedom of expression. Their lives, and those of other staff at the *Radio 10* radio station, are in danger.

At about 7am on 23 August, Vinicio Aguilar Mancilla was out jogging in Guatemala City when he was shot and wounded by two unidentified men riding on a gold-coloured motorbike. One of the men got off the motorbike and approached Vinicio Aguilar from behind, put his gun into his mouth and shot. The bullet broke Vinicio Aguilar's right jaw, perforated the cheek and wounded his right hand. The gunman's accomplice shouted "*Acábalo, acábalo*" ("Finish him off, finish him off"), but the gunman replied "*Ya está muerto*" ("He's already dead"). When the two assailants left the scene, Vinicio Aguilar was able to make his way home. He received hospital treatment for his injuries, and has recovered sufficiently to be discharged, but due to concerns for his safety he is still staying in the hospital. It is feared that the shot he received in the mouth could signify that he has "spoken too much" on his programme on the *Radio 10* radio station.

At 8.40am on 22 August, a caller on Oscar Rodolfo Castañeda's *Radio 10* show threatened him live on air, saying: "*Este es un mensaje para Oscar Rodolfo Castañeda; por hablar de la evasión fiscal estás cavando tu tumba, te dejamos ocho días para abandonar el país*" ("This is a message for Oscar Rodolfo Castañeda; by talking about tax evasion you are digging your own grave, we are giving you eight days to leave the country").

Both Vinicio Aguilar and Oscar Rodolfo Castañeda have publicly denounced tax evasion by an important Guatemalan company on their radio shows and have also covered other controversial issues such as public security, genocide and impunity. The Guatemala City-based *Radio 10* has suffered acts of intimidation since 2005, including theft of broadcasting equipment, interference with their transmission signal, judicial harassment and administrative obstacles regarding their licence and permits.

The attempted murder of Vinicio Aguilar and the threat against Oscar Rodolfo Castañeda have been reported to the government's Human Rights Ombudsman's office. The Ombudsman has ordered special security measures to be taken to protect the two journalists, but so far no action has been taken to implement these measures.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Respect for freedom of expression has improved in Guatemala since the end of the internal armed conflict in 1996. About 100 journalists were killed or "disappeared" in those years and many more were threatened. However, the number of death threats against journalists seems to have risen again, in part due to the lack of state control over public security and the proliferation of violent gangs, many of which have links to the security forces.

This is the fourteenth case of death threats and harassment against journalists reported to the Human Rights Ombudsman this year. The Inter-American Press Association, the *Asociación de Periodistas Guatemaltecos*, (Association of Guatemalan Journalists) and the Office of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights' Special Rapporteur of Freedom of Expression have repeatedly expressed their concerns for the safety of journalists.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Vinicio Aguilar Mancilla, Oscar Rodolfo Castañeda and other staff at *Radio 10* in Guatemala City;
- calling on the authorities to take immediate steps to guarantee their safety, in accordance with their own wishes;
- urging the authorities to order full and impartial investigations into the attempted murder of Vinicio Aguilar Mancilla and the death threat against Oscar Rodolfo Castañeda, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- calling on the authorities to outline the measures it is employing to guarantee freedom of expression and of information in Guatemala.

APPEALS TO:

The President of the Republic

Presidente de la República de Guatemala

Licenciado Oscar Berger Perdomo

Casa Presidencial, 6 a. Avenida, 4-18 zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: +502 2239 0090

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Berger

Human Rights Ombudsman

Procurador de los Derechos Humanos

Dr. Sergio Fernando Morales Alvarado

Procuraduría de los Derechos Humanos (PDH)

12 Avenida 12-72, zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: +502 2424 1714

Salutation: Estimado Sr. Procurador/Dear Human Rights Ombudsman

COPIES TO:

Radio 10

6ª Avenida, 11-77 Zona 10 Penthouse, Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: +502 2332 9308

Email: info@radio10.com.gt

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 13 October 2006.