

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 34/34/97

4 September 1997

Further information on EXTRA 101/97 (AMR 34/28/97, 15 July 1997) - Death Penalty

GUATEMALA Manuel Martínez Coronado

Manuel Martínez Coronado is reported to have been transferred to the Pavón Prison, *Granja Penal de Pavón*, where it is feared he may soon become the first Guatemalan to be executed by lethal injection.

Following national and international revulsion at the grotesque nature of the first execution in 13 years in Guatemala of Pedro Castillo Mendoza and Roberto Girón on 13 September 1996, which was shown live on Guatemalan television and then broadcast around the world, Guatemalan Congress approved a measure providing for future executions to be carried out by lethal injection. Pedro Castillo Mendoza and Roberto Girón were shot by firing squad (see EXTRA 100/96, AMR 34/18/96, 2 July 1996 and update AMR 34/29/96, 24 September).

Analysis of cases of executions by lethal injection in the United States of America indicates that: first, those executed in this way do not die immediately, but may take as long as 45 minutes to die; and second, that death by lethal injection can be extremely painful. This new information undermines frequent claims that lethal injection is the most "humanitarian" way to execute convicted criminals.

Amnesty International recognizes the duty of governments to bring to justice those suspected of violent crimes. However, irrespective of the method of execution, Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases on the grounds that it is a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Manuel Martínez Coronado was sentenced to death in October 1995 for the multiple homicide of seven members of a family in May 1995.

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

- recognizing the seriousness of the crime for which Manuel Martínez was convicted, but expressing unconditional opposition to the death penalty in all cases;
- urging that his death sentence be commuted to a more humane punishment;
- explaining that lethal injection is **not** a "humanitarian" way to execute people (if possible give details of the evidence from the USA as described above);
- stressing that the death penalty, however inflicted, always amounts to cruel, degrading and inhuman punishment, and is brutalizing to all involved in its application.

APPEALS TO:

Vice-Minister of the Interior
Sr. Salvador Gándara
Viceministro de Gobernación
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Despacho Ministerial, Of. N° 8
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Salutation: Sr. Viceministro

President of Congress

Sra. Arabela Castro Quiñones

Presidenta del Congreso Nacional de la República

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Salutation: Sra. Presidenta

Procurator General

Lic. Acisclo Valladares Molina

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Salutation: Señor Procurador

COPIES TO:

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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 5 October 1997.