

UA 396/94 Possible extrajudicial execution / Fear for safety 8 November 1994**GUATEMALA** Manuel López, aged 30, returned refugee  
Other returned refugees

Concern for the safety of returned refugees in Guatemala has been heightened by the killing of Manuel López, himself recently returned from exile in Mexico.

Manuel López was found dead near the temporary settlement of "Centro Veracruz" of the Ixcán Grande Cooperative, Department of El Quiché, on 27 October 1994.

Reports state that his hands were tied and that his body showed signs of ill-treatment. On 28 October the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other agencies brought his body to the city of Cobán, Department of Alta Verapaz, for an official autopsy.

Manuel López had previously lived in the refugee camp of Quetzal Edzna, in the state of Campeche, Mexico. He had returned to Guatemala on 13 May 1994 and had resettled in the "Centro Veracruz".

Since refugees began returning to Guatemala there have been many reports of threats, attacks and other acts of intimidation against them, apparently by members of the army and civilian militias, raising concern that the killing of Manuel Lopez may have been an extrajudicial execution.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Tens of thousands of Guatemalans, many of them indigenous peasants, fled Guatemala in the late 1970s and early 1980s, escaping the Guatemalan army's scorched earth counter-insurgency campaign which claimed many thousands of non-combatant victims. Up to a million others were reportedly displaced inside Guatemala.

In October 1992, refugee representatives and the Guatemalan government agreed on a plan for the return of refugees living in UNHCR camps in Mexico. Following on from that accord, and as part of the current peace negotiations, government, guerrilla and UN representatives signed the *Acuerdo para el Reasentamiento de las Poblaciones Desarraigadas por el Enfrentamiento Armado*, Accord for the Resettlement of People Displaced by the Armed Conflict, on 17 June 1994.

According to refugees' representatives, 6,000 refugees have returned to Guatemala since January 1993 and another 1,300 are planning to return before the end of 1994. Since the return began, there have been numerous reports of threats, attacks and other acts of harassment against the returnee communities, reportedly by members of the army and the so called "Peace and Development Committees", the new name which has been given to the *Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil* (PACs), Civil Defence Patrols. These were civilian militias formed under military behest and operating under military command.

In August 1994, some 300 refugees returning from Mexico, and due to resettle in the community of "Los Cimientos", Department of El Quiché, were subjected to death threats by members of the local PACs.

Since the first return in January 1993, there have been reports of tense confrontations between communities of returned refugees and the army in the

Ixcán region.

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

- expressing concern about the killing of returned refugee Manuel López in circumstances suggesting an extrajudicial execution;
- asking for an investigation into his death, that the findings be made public and that those found responsible be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to guarantee the safety of all the returned refugees and displaced communities, as agreed in the accord signed by the government on 17 June 1994.

**APPEALS TO**

1) President of the Republic:

S.E. Ramiro de León Carpio  
 Presidente de la República de Guatemala  
 Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Telegrams: Presidente de León Carpio, Guatemala, Guatemala**  
**Faxes: + 502 2 347 364**  
**Telexes: 5331 CAPRES GU**  
**Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente /Dear President**

2) Minister of Interior:

Lic. Danilo Parrinello Blanco  
 Ministro de Gobernación  
 Ministerio de Gobernación  
 Despacho Ministerial, Of. No. 8  
 Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Telegrams: Ministro de Gobernación, Guatemala, Guatemala**  
**Faxes: + 502 2 515 368 / 518 105**  
**Telexes: 5085 MINGOB**  
**Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister**

3) Minister of Defence:

Gral. Mario Enríquez Morales  
 Ministro de Defensa  
 Ministerio de Defensa  
 Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa, Guatemala, Guatemala**  
**Faxes: + 502 2 515 252 / 21906**  
**Telexes: 5361 COMGUA GU**  
**Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

Human Rights Procurator

Lic. Jorge García Laguardia  
 Procurador de los Derechos Humanos  
 12 Avenida 12-72  
 Zona 1, Guatemala  
 GUATEMALA

Human Rights Group

Comisiones Permanentes de Representantes de los Refugiados Guatemaltecos en México (CCPP)

6a. Avenida 3-23  
Zona 1, Guatemala  
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 20 December 1994.