

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Possible Extrajudicial Execution

30 October 1990

GUATEMALA: Hugo René LÓPEZ RIVERA, aged 8

Amnesty International is concerned at the circumstances surrounding the killing of eight-year-old child, Hugo René López Rivera on 24 October in Guatemala City.

Hugo René López was a member of a street gang ("mara") called "Los Cochinitos", made up of young children. According to the child's mother, Hugo René López left home on the afternoon of 24 October, but did not return home. His body was found in the early morning of 25 October with signs of having been brutally beaten, with severe blows to his chest, back, arms and face, and signs of haemorrhaging from the nose and mouth. There were also signs of strangulation.

Members of the street group "Los Cochinitos" have been reportedly questioned and followed by both uniformed and undercover policemen, since the attack on street child Nahamán Carmona López, aged 13, who was attacked on the street in Guatemala City on 4 March 1990 and died as a result. It is reported that members of "Los Cochinitos" discovered him unconscious and thinking he was dead put some white crepe paper over the unconscious boy. (See UA 294/90, AMR 34/43/90, 10 July and follow-up, AMR 34/45/90, 26 July). That same night members of "Los Cochinitos" were reportedly stopped and questioned by police asking if they had seen the attack on Nahamán Carmona. Four policemen were subsequently arrested in connection with the killing of Nahamán Carmona, but all deny involvement. (See also Guatemala: Extrajudicial Executions and Human Rights Violations against Street Children, AI Index: AMR 34/37/90, July 1990)

Since the death of Nahamán Carmona, a number of his friends and witnesses to the attack have reportedly been subjected to threats, intimidation and beatings. Amnesty International is therefore concerned that members of the security forces may have been involved in the killing of Hugo René López Rivera.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent months, Amnesty International has been deeply disturbed at reports of human rights abuses, including harassment, threats, attacks and beatings, torture and apparent human rights violations carried out against street children by Guatemala City police, acting sometimes in uniform and sometimes in plain clothes. According to non-governmental sources in Guatemala there are some 5,000 children, aged five to 18 years, living on the streets of Guatemala City. Many are orphaned, abandoned or handicapped; they search for food among the garbage and sleep under parked cars or on sidewalks. Some were displaced by the army counter-insurgency campaigns of the early 1980's; others were forced onto the streets for other reasons. Most reportedly survive by stealing, begging and prostitution. Some of the young victims of human rights violations have been involved in street crime. However, crime control can never be used as an excuse for violating the basic human rights of children, including the right to life.

Investigations into a number of the reported abuses appear to have stopped. Amnesty International is concerned that failure by the authorities to determine the perpetrators and bring them to justice could serve to encourage further such abuses.

It is also concerned that witnesses to violations, or those who press for inquiries into them, appear to be in danger of reprisals.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern about the killing of Hugo René López Rivera in circumstances suggesting security force involvement;

- asking for an immediate investigation into the killing and that those found to be responsible be brought to justice;

- asking for guarantees for his friends and other street children, who have suffered abuses in connection with the killing of Nahamán Carmona López.

APPEALS TO

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and to diplomatic representatives of Guatemala in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat or your section office if sending appeals after 11 December 1990.