

URGENT ACTION

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISTS THREATENED

Staff at the Centre for Environmental, Social and Legal Action (Centro de Acción Legal, Ambiental y Social de Guatemala – CALAS) have received death threats. In recent months, CALAS have been promoting a public campaign against corruption and the building of a gas plant in a nature reserve. Their staff are all in danger.

The director and legal adviser at CALAS, Yuri Melini and Rafael Maldonado, received envelopes on 29 August, at 9.30am. Each contained the same documents: a threat; papers from the Office of the Comptroller General (*Contraloría General de Cuentas*); and mug-shot photographs of 18 men, that appear to have been taken from police files.

The note read, *Metan preso a quien quieran y sigan haciendo el show que quieran... Nosotros empezaremos a ajustar nuestras cuentas después del 14-01-2012.* [14 de enero de 2012 es el primer día del mandato del nuevo presidente en Guatemala] *Sera problema de los que vienen y ustedes dejaran de estar haciendo escandalo* ("Get whoever you want arrested and keep doing the show you want... We will set our records straight after 14-01-2012. [14 January 2012 is the first day of the new President's term in Guatemala.] It's going to be a problem for those who come next and you're going to stop making a fuss"). It also warned, *Rafel Maldonado sientete triunfador... Yuri, Yuri no aprendes que la vida hay que llevarla en paz* (Rafel Maldonado you (must) feel like a winner [...] Yuri, Yuri don't you learn that life must be lived peacefully").

In recent months, CALAS has promoted a public campaign against corruption and the building of a gas plant in a nature reserve in north-eastern Guatemala, Punta de Manabique, Izabal department. CALAS filed a complaint with the Constitutional Court on the case and had also lobbied for the dismissal of a civil servant responsible for management of nature reserves, on the grounds of corruption.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish, English or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to order an independent, thorough and impartial investigation into the threats made against CALAS staff, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Urging them to take immediate steps to provide full and appropriate protection to Rafael Maldonado and other CALAS staff members, in accordance with their wishes;
- Reminding them that human rights defenders have a right to carry out their activities without any unfair restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 11 OCTOBER 2011 TO:

Attorney General

Claudia Paz y Paz Bailey
Fiscal General de la República
Ministerio Público
15ª Avenida 15-16, Zona 1, Barrio
Gerona
Ciudad de Guatemala,
GUATEMALA
Fax: +502 2411 9124
Salutation: **Dear Attorney General /
Estimada Sra. Fiscal General**

President

Ing. Álvaro Colom Caballeros
Presidente de la República
Casa Presidencial
6ª Avenida 4-41, Zona 1,
Puerta del Centro
Ciudad de Guatemala
GUATEMALA
Fax: **+502 2221 4445**
Salutation: **Dear President/
Estimado Sr. Presidente**

And copies to:

CALAS

Av. Mariscal 13-59 zona 11
Guatemala City
Guatemala

Fax: +502 24744545

Email: informacion@calas.org.gt

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Guatemalan environmental activists have been attacked to stop them from carrying out their legitimate activities. They work to protect the environment and the human rights of indigenous and peasant communities whose livelihoods depend upon the environment.

On 8 September 2008, CALAS director Yuri Melini was shot by masked men, apparently in connection with his work (See UA 248/08, AMR 34/021/2008, 8 September 2008). Following the attack, Yuri Melini and CALAS were granted protection from the state.

On 10 January 2007, Carlos Albacete Rosales and Piedad Espinosa Albacete of the environmental organization Trópico Verde were shot at while they were in a taxi. They managed to escape unscathed. In January and February 2007, Flaviano Bianchini of the environmental organization MadreSelva Collective (*Colectivo MadreSelva*) was threatened with death and followed on several occasions (see *Persecution and Resistance: The experience of human rights defenders in Guatemala and Honduras*, AMR 02/001/2007).

Name: Yuri Melini, Rafael Maldonado

Gender m/f: male

UA: 261/11 Index: AMR 34/011/2011 Issue Date: 30 August 2011

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