

PUBLIC

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Death threats/fear for safety

GUATEMALA

Carmen Judith Morán Cruz (f) journalist  
Her family

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Carmen Judith Morán Cruz and her family following a recent anonymous death threat. Carmen Judith Morán Cruz is a regional reporter for the news service agency, *Centro de Reportes Informativos sobre Guatemala* (CERIGUA), Centre for Information on Guatemala, in the town of Salamá, Baja Verapaz department.

At approximately 9.30pm on the evening of 29 June, Carmen Judith Morán Cruz received two telephone calls at her home in which an unidentified caller threatened, "*te doy 24 horas para que renunciés de CERIGUA, porque ya me colmaste la paciencia por las publicaciones que hacen allí, si no cumplís con esto, tus hijos y tu familia sufrirán las consecuencias*" ("you have 24 hours to resign from CERIGUA, I've had enough of the publications you do there, if you don't do it, your children and family will suffer the consequences").

In February her bag, containing important papers relating to her work for CERIGUA and her press identification, was stolen. Whilst this incident may have been common crime, Amnesty International believes that the possibility that it may be linked to her journalistic work cannot be ruled out.

The Salamá branch of CERIGUA works on a variety of sensitive local issues including covering exhumations and local land conflicts. It has also covered the incident on 14 June in which the current president of Congress, Efraín Ríos Montt, currently seeking to be Presidential candidate for the ruling *Frente Republicano Guatemalteco* (FRG), Guatemalan Republican Front, was forced to abandon a rally in the nearby town of Rabinal. The rally was taking place at the same time as a ceremony to re-bury those massacred during the military government's counterinsurgency strategy of the 1980s.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

CERIGUA was founded on 8 August 1983 and has since reported extensively on the human rights situation in Guatemala. As a result it has been subject to constant intimidation, including harassment and attacks against its reporters in both the capital Guatemala City and its regional offices as well as acts of intimidation against CERIGUA's director (see UA 97/03, AMR 34/023/2003, 11 April 2003 and UA 66/03, AMR 34/014/2003, 7 March 2003).

On 24 June, Rubén Zamora, editor of a major Guatemalan newspaper which has been outspoken in its denunciation of corruption amongst high level officials of the current administration, was attacked in his home. The attack came the day after Zamora had published an opinion piece which charged Efraín Ríos Montt, with being an integral part of the so-called "parallel power structure" which Zamora said had not only run the country for the last twenty years, but also headed up the country's extensive organised crime network.

Efraín Ríos Montt presided over one of the worst phases of the army's scorched earth counter-insurgency campaign in the rural areas during the early 1980s, when tens of thousands of non-combatant indigenous men, women and children were killed in hundreds of army massacres, often preceded by torture including rape.

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

- expressing grave concern for the safety of Carmen Judith Morán Cruz, her family and other staff members of the *Centro de Reportes Informativos sobre Guatemala* (CERIGUA);
- urging that immediate measures be taken to ensure the safety of all members of CERIGUA;
- pressing the authorities to carry out an immediate, impartial and exhaustive investigation into the threats, to make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;
- expressing concern at the recent escalation of attacks against and intimidation of human rights defenders following the signing of the *Comisión para la Investigación de Cuerpos Illegales y Aparatos Clandestinos de Seguridad* (CICIACS), document, which will lead to the formation of a commission to investigate human rights abuses allegedly committed by illegal armed groups and clandestine security apparatus;
- urging the government to collaborate fully with the work of the proposed CICIACS, ensuring that it comes quickly into being, that its work is unhindered; and that its conclusions result in the complete dismantling of these groups and the prosecution of those responsible for their operations.

**APPEALS TO:**

Special Prosecutor for Crimes against Journalists and Union Members

Lic. Marco Antonio Cortez Sis

Fiscal de delitos contra periodistas y sindicalistas

7ª. Avenida 11-20 Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala.

**Fax: + 502 220 6873 (if someone answers please say "fax por favor")**

**Salutation: Señor Fiscal Especial/Dear Special Prosecutor**

Regional offices of Ministerio Público

Nicolaz García Fuentes

Ministerio Público

2a Calle, 3-74 Zona 2,

Barrio San José Salamá

Baja Verapaz, Guatemala

**Fax: +502 940 2023/4/5 (if someone answers please say "fax por favor")**

**Salutation: Señor Fiscal/Dear Prosecutor**

Regional Police Chief

Jefe Comisario 52 Policía Nacional Civil (Salamá)

7a Avenida , 39, Zona 1

Salamá, Baja Verapaz, Guatemala

**Fax: +502 940 0168 (if someone answers please say "fax por favor")**

**Salutation: Estimado Señor Jefe/ Dear Sir**

Attorney General

Lic. Carlos David de León Argueta

Fiscal General de la República

Fiscalía General del Ministerio Público

8a. Avenida 10-57, Tercer nivel, Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

**Fax: + 502 221 2718 (please keep trying)**

**E-mail: fiscaldeleon@mp.lex.gob.gt**

**Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Senor Fiscal General**

**COPIES TO:**

Human Rights Procurator

Dr. Sergio Fernando Morales Alvarado

Procurador de los Derechos Humanos

12 Avenida, 12-72, Zona 1#Guatemala, CA, Guatemala

**Fax: + 502 2381 734**

Press Agency

CERIGUA

2a Calle 1-42, Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

**Fax: + 502 221 2521 (if someone answers please say "fax por favor")**

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 14 August 2003.