

UA 72/02

Fear for

**GUATEMALA Members of Casa Alianza
Street children they have worked for**

The offices of Casa Alianza, an organization that helps street children, were broken into on 7 March, and files containing confidential information on children who have allegedly been ill-treated by police were ransacked. Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of both Casa Alianza employees and the children it supports.

At least two people reportedly broke into the offices that house Casa Alianza's Street Educators Programme, in central Guatemala City. At least two of the 12 filing cabinets in the office were reportedly forced open and files containing information on children helped by Casa Alianza, and street children who had experienced problems with the police, were opened and left strewn over the office floor. It is not yet known if any files were stolen.

A video camera and a rucksack was taken, but other valuable electrical equipment, including a laptop computer, was left untouched. This suggests that the motive for the break-in was not robbery, as the authorities have suggested.

Police have reportedly found fingerprints at the scene, and are said to be investigating.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The same Casa Alianza office was ransacked in April 2001, and files on 12 street children, who had been helped by the Street Educators program, were stolen (see UA 90/01, AMR 34/011/2001, 9 April 2001). Earlier that year Casa Alianza had helped two street girls to file a formal complaint that they had been raped by two plainclothes police officers, and there were reports that the raid was linked to this.

In September 2001, the coordinator of Casa Alianza's Legal Assistance Programme, Héctor Dionisio Godinez, reported receiving a series of death threats on his home and mobile telephones, and also said that another car had attempted to force him off the road while he was driving to work with some work colleagues.

For almost two years, Guatemalan NGOs have been experiencing a new wave of abuses, and many have suffered similar raids on their offices. The authorities have not carried out genuine investigations into these raids, usually claiming that they were simple burglaries (see for example UA 265/00, 5 September 2000, AMR 34/35/00).

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

- asking the authorities to immediately investigate the 7 March break-in at the offices of Casa Alianza, and to bring those responsible to justice;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee the safety of Casa Alianza staff and all the children they are working for, particularly any whose files have been removed;
- urging the authorities ensure that those involved in legitimate efforts to return Guatemala to the rule of law can work in safety, and to bring those responsible for past abuses to justice;
- reminding the authorities that continued international support for the country's peace process depends on progress in human rights, and that attacks

on the offices of human rights defenders, such as Casa Alianza, cannot be tolerated.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic of Guatemala

Lic. Alfonso Portillo Cabrera
Presidente de la República de Guatemala
6a. Avenida "A" 4-41, Zona 1,
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Telegrams:Presidente de la República de Guatemala, Ciudad de Guatemala,
Guatemala**

Fax: + 502 239 0090 (please keep trying this number)

Email:mensajes@presidenteportillo.gob.gt

Salutation:Dear President/Señor Presidente

Minister of the Interior

Eduardo Arévalo Lacs
Ministro de Gobernación
Ministerio de Gobernación
6ª Avenida 4-64, Zona 4
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegrams:Ministro de Gobernación, Ciudad de Guatemala , Guatemala

Fax:+ 502 362 0239/ 362 0237

Email: monica24@intelnet.net.gt

Salutation: Dear Minister/Señor Ministro

Director General of the National Civil Police

Comisario Luis Arturo Paniagua Galicia
6ª Avenida 13-71, Zona 1
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Telegrams:Comisario Luis Arturo Paniagua Galicia, Ciudad de Guatemala ,
Guatemala**

Fax: + 502 251 9382

Salutation:Dear Director/Señor Director

Magistrate Court for Minors

Corte Magistratura de Menores
Edificio Magistratura de Me Menores
Calle 6 4-44, Zona 9
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax:+ 502 360 7958

COPIES TO:

Casa Alianza

4a Avenida 2-12, zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: + 502 250 0366 (if a voice answers, say "Por favor, tono de fax")

E-Mail: guatemala@casa-alianza.org

Newspapers

Diario "Prensa Libre"
13 Calle 9-31, Zona 1
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: + 502 251 8768

Cerigua

2a calle 1-42, Zona 1
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala
Fax: + 502 221 2521 (if a voice answers, say "Por favor, tono de fax")
Email: Cerigua@guate.net

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 22 April 2002.