

PUBLIC

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Extrajudi

GUATEMALA Staff of *La Fundación Rigoberta Menchú Tum (FRMT)*, the Rigoberta Menchú Foundation, Guatemala City

Killed: Guillermo Ovalle de León (m), aged 30

Amnesty International is deeply concerned for the safety of staff members from the *Fundación Rigoberta Menchú Tum (FRMT)*, Rigoberta Menchú Tum Foundation, following the murder of Guillermo Ovalle de León on 29 April. His killing may be part of an effort to intimidate the FRMT, in order to stop their attempts to bring to justice former Guatemalan officials who have carried out massacres.

Guillermo Ovalle de León was an administrative worker for the FRMT and nephew of the Executive Director. On 29 April, as he ate lunch at a local restaurant close to the FRMT offices, three gunmen reportedly entered and began robbing customers. When one customer resisted, the gunmen opened fire and Guillermo Ovalle de León was shot at least 25 times. Two other people were injured in the incident, which the authorities have described as a common crime.

Prior to the shooting, two suspicious looking individuals and a car with polarised windows, were allegedly seen outside the FRMT offices. At about the same time as Guillermo Ovalle de León was killed, several anonymous telephone calls were made to the FRMT offices, in which the funeral march was played.

Guatemalan Human rights groups are concerned that Guillermo Ovalle de León's killing, may have been an act of intimidation and not a common crime. The shooting occurred, one day before civil hearings into the alleged massacre of 11 peasants in the village of Xamán by Guatemalan soldiers in 1995. The FRMT is providing legal support for massacre survivors involved in the hearings.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

For almost two years, Guatemalan human rights defenders have been experiencing a new wave of abuses. Many have been threatened, harassed, and intimidated for their efforts to investigate past human rights violations and to bring those responsible to justice.

In December 1999, the FRMT filed a suit in Spain against a number of former Guatemalan officials for genocide and other crimes against humanity. In March 2000, a Spanish judge ruled that the case could be considered in Spain. Since filing the suit, FRMT staff have been experiencing harassment and persecution, including death threats. In December 2000, the Spanish National Court ruled that it had no *current* jurisdiction to hear the case. The FRMT appealed the decision and on 26 April 2002, three days before Guillermo Ovalle de León's killing, the Spanish Supreme Court announced that the appeal hearing would take place on 30 May 2002.

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

- expressing grave concern at the killing of Guillermo Ovalle de León;
- urging the authorities to investigate the motive for his killing and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to investigate the anonymous calls made to the FRMT offices at the time of the killing;
- urging the authorities to take all necessary measures to ensure the safety of FRMT staff members;

- reminding the authorities of their obligations to human rights defenders, as laid out in the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted in December 1998, and in resolutions by the Organization of American States.

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

Telegram: Presidente de la República de Guatemala, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

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

Salutation: Dear President/Señor Presidente

Vice-president of the Republic of Guatemala

Lic. Juan Francisco Reyes López
6ª Avenida 'A' 4-18
Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegram: Vicepresidente de la República, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

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

Salutation: Dear vice-president/Señor Vicepresidente

Minister of the Interior

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

Telegram: Ministro de Gobernación, Ciudad de Guatemala , Guatemala

Fax: + 502 362 0239/ 362 0237

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

Telegram: Comisario Luis Arturo Paniagua Galicia, Ciudad de Guatemala , Guatemala

Fax: + 502 251 9382

Salutation: Dear Director/Señor Director

COPIES TO:

Fundación Rigoberta Menchú Tum

Rigoberta Menchú Foundation
1ª. Calle 7-45, Edificio Soalsa
Zona 1 , Ciudad de Guatemala
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Fax: + 502 254 4477

Human Rights Procurator

Lic. Julio Eduardo Arango Escobar
Procurador de Derechos Humanos
Procuraduría de los Derechos Humanos
12 Avenida 12-72, Zona 1
Ciudad de Guatemala 01001, GUATEMALA
Fax: + 502 238 1734
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Salutation: Señor Procurador/Dear Procurator

Newspaper
Diario Prensa Libre
13 Calle 9-31, Zona 1
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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 12 June 2002.