

GUATEMALA Human Rights Defenders in Guatemala City and the Department of Jutiapa

Days before the Second Latin American consultation on Human Rights Defenders begins in Guatemala, several offices of human rights defenders have been broken into and important information stolen. Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of the human rights defenders in Guatemala City and the Department of Jutiapa.

On the night of 21 July, the headquarters of the *Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos de Guatemala* (Conadehgua), the National Coordination of Human Rights in Guatemala, which shares its offices with four other human rights organisations, were broken into. Computer equipment, telephones and faxes were stolen. All the organizations' files containing important information on their work, including the remilitarization of the country, the role of the former civil patrols in Guatemala and cases of past disappearances were also stolen.

Cars belonging to the *Estado Mayor*, the Presidential High Command, which operates as a military intelligence centre, were reportedly seen patrolling the area prior to the break-in. Foot prints apparently made by military boots were also reportedly found in the offices. The intruders reportedly stayed for several hours and deliberately left photographs of two of Conadehgua's directors on a desk apparently as a threat. The nature of the break-in points to it being the work of intelligence agents and not a robbery by delinquents.

On the night of 14 July, intruders stole the hard disk of a computer shared by two community organisations, *Asociación de Campesinos de Jutiapa*, Jutiapa Peasant Association, and the *Asociación de Mujeres Campesinas y No Campesinas*, Association of Peasant and Non-peasant Women, and the regional out post of the news agency, *Centro de Reportes Informativos sobre Guatemala* (CERIGUA), Centre of Informative Reports on Guatemala. The hard disk contained information on local land conflicts, including details of peasants in need of land, and the creation of a new Forum set up to support the implementation of Guatemala's 1996 Peace Accords.

Civil society in the state of Jutiapa, historically dominated by the right, has been characterised by weak community mobilisation. Despite the break-in being reported to the Public Prosecutor's Office and the National Civil Police, neither body has investigated the incident.

The incidents are believed to be an effort to intimidate community and human rights activists into stopping their work and their ability to voice their concerns to the International Community. On 23 July, the Latin American and Caribbean Consultation on Human Rights Defenders began. Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR), Santiago Canton will be attending the consultation and taking part in a delegation to evaluate reports of a worsening human rights situation in Guatemala.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Guatemalan human rights and community activists have been experiencing a heightened wave of abuses and intimidation over recent months. Several offices

of human rights organisations have been raided, apparently in order to obtain information on their work and to intimidate them into stopping their work (see UA 89/02, AMR 34/019/2002, 22 March 2002 and UA 72/02, AMR 34/016/2002, 11 March 2002). In recent months there have also been a number of apparent extrajudicial killings. In April, an employee of the Rigoberta Menchú Foundation was killed and in June, three land activists were also killed.

The four other human rights organisations based in the Conadehgua offices are: *Instancia Institucional por la Paz y la Reconciliación*, Institutional Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation, *Centro Internacional para Investigaciones en Derechos Humanos*, International Centre for Investigations into Human Rights, *Fundación de Acompañamiento Internacional de Guatemala*, International Accompaniment of Guatemala and *Fundación del Acompañamiento de Austria*, Austrian Foundation of Accompaniment.

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

- urging the authorities to take immediate and effective measures to guarantee the safety of members of the organisations named above;
- calling for an immediate and thorough investigation into the break-ins, for the results to be made public, and those responsible to be brought to justice;
- expressing concern for the safety of all those involved in efforts to protect human rights and freedom of expression, particularly those who have suffered recent intimidation and threats;
- pointing out that the Guatemalan government is obliged to support the work of human rights defenders, referring to the resolution on Human Rights Defenders in the Americas, supported by Guatemala and adopted by the General Assembly of the Organization of American States, in Guatemala, in June 1999.

APPEALS TO:

Vice-president of the Republic of Guatemala

Lic. Juan Francisco Reyes López

6a. Avenida 'A' 4-18

Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

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

Fax: + 502 239 0090 (please keep trying)

Salutation: Dear Vice-president/Señor Vicepresidente

Minister of the Interior

Lic. Adolfo Reyes Calderón

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 0237

Salutation: Dear Minister/Señor Ministro

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

Telegrams: Fiscal General de la República, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax: + 502 221 2718

Salutation: Señor Fiscal/Dear Sir

Director General of the National Civil Police

Comisario Luis Arturo Paniagua Galicia

6^a 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

COPIES TO:

Press agency

Cerigua

2a calle 1-42, Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: + 502 238 1456/ 221 2521/ 251 1289 (If someone answers say "me podría dar tono de fax por favor")

CONADEHGUA

2 Calle, 4-42, Zona 2

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

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 3 September 2002.