

**PUBLIC**

**AI Index: AMR 34/050/2002**

**UA 265/02**

**Death threats/Fear for safety 28 August 2002**

**GUATEMALA**

**Rolando Noriega (m)  
Erick Villatoro Letona (m)  
Rubén Ríos (m)  
Gerson Palacios (m)  
All staff of Human Rights Procurator's Auxiliary Office in  
Huehuetenango**

Amnesty International is deeply concerned for the safety of staff members of the *Procuraduría Auxiliar de Derechos Humanos* (PDH), Human Rights Procurator's Auxiliary Office in the department of Huehuetenango, in the northwestern highlands of Guatemala. The people named above have received a series of anonymous death threats, and shots were fired outside the PDH office on the night of 24 August.

Over the past three months, intimidation of PDH staff has increased dramatically. During this time, staff members have received anonymous calls, both to the office and to their homes, in which they received death threats, and the sound of gun shots was played. Rolando Noriega, who lives in the PDH office building, also reported hearing seven gun shots fired just outside the office on the night of 24 August. In June and July of this year, Gerson Palacios reported being followed on several occasions by a black pick-up truck and being watched by suspicious-looking men outside his home. The men also reportedly kicked the doors of his house.

The PDH believes the threats to be an effort to intimidate PDH staff to stop their work investigating violations committed by government employees, such as by agents of the national police (PNC), mayors and migration officers. The regional office has reportedly recently opened several important proceedings against government employees and initiated investigations into their abuse of authority.

The recent incidents of threats and intimidation have been reported to the Central offices of the Human Rights Procurator (PDH), the United Nations Verification Mission to Guatemala (MINUGUA) and the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights (CIDH).

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The PDH is mandated to carry out inquiries into reported abuses by employees of official agencies. At present they are investigating 78 cases of abuses of authority by official employees. Staff from a number of regional PDH offices have been targets in what appears to be a systematic pattern of threats and intimidation over the past two years, in reprisal for their work.

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

- expressing serious concern that staff of government offices mandated to protect human rights and investigate abuses have been threatened and intimidated;
- asking the authorities to investigate immediately the reported threats, make the results public, and bring those responsible to justice;
- urging the authorities to take the necessary measures to ensure the safety of all staff members of the Human Rights Procurator's Office, both in Huehuetenango and in other parts of the country;
- asking the government to express publicly official support for the important work of the PDH and ensure that the PDH has effective powers to protect its staff and all witnesses and others contributing to its investigations.

#### **APPEALS TO:**

Minister of the Interior

Lic. Adolfo Reyes Calderón

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 0237**

**Salutation:** **Dear Minister/Señor Ministro**

Secretary of Strategic Affairs

Lic. Edgar A. Gutiérrez

Secretario de Asuntos Estratégicos

Secretaría de Asuntos Estratégicos

6a Avenida "A" 3-53, Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Fax:** **+ 502 2322886**

**Salutation:** **Señor Secretario/Dear Secretary**

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

**Telegram:** **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

Director General de la Policía Nacional Civil

6a Avenida 13-71, Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Telegram:** **Director General de la Policía, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala**

**Fax:** **+ 502 251 9382**

**Salutation:** **Senor Director / Dear Director**

**COPIES TO:**

Human Rights Procurator's Office in Huehuetenango

8 Avenida 1-80,

Huehuetenango

Guatemala

**Fax:** **+ 502 764 2343**

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")**

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 9 October 2002.