

PUBLIC

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UA 90/01

Fear for

GUATEMALA Members of Casa Alianza

The offices of Casa Alianza, an organisation that helps street children, were broken into on 2 April, and their files were ransacked. The organisation is also concerned about two street girls allegedly raped by uniformed police officers, and Amnesty International is concerned that the break-in may be linked to this.

At least two people reportedly broke into the central Guatemala City offices that house Casa Alianza's Street Educators and Legal Aid Program. A filing cabinet, containing information on individual children helped by the Street Educators program, was forced open, and hundreds of files were strewn around the office. It is not yet clear whether any files were taken, but two digital cameras are reportedly missing.

For a week before the break-in Casa Alianza had been receiving a series of strange phone calls and increasingly frequent visits by the police. The organization immediately reported the break-in to the police, who apparently found several sets of fingerprints at the scene of the crime.

The break-in comes in the wake of other reported suspicious burglaries, attacks, or threats against the staff of other non-governmental organisations in Guatemala (see UA 377/00 and UA 265/00).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Two street girls were allegedly raped by two uniformed members of the Guatemalan National Civil Police on 30 January 2001, in Guatemala City. The following day, Casa Alianza made a formal complaint to the Office of Professional Responsibility of the Guatemalan National Civil Police. AI does not know of any investigation into the alleged rapes, but Casa Alianza believe that its attempt to force an enquiry may have provoked the recent strange phone calls, police visits and, possibly, this recent raid on their offices.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in Spanish or your own language:

- asking the authorities to immediately investigate the 2 April break-in at the offices of Casa Alianza, and to bring those responsible to justice;
- asking what progress has been made in any investigation into the alleged rape of two street girls by police officers in January;
- urging the authorities ensure that those involved in legitimate efforts to return Guatemala to a state 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

Lic. Alfonso Portillo Cabrera
Presidente de la República de Guatemala
6a. Avenida "A" 4-18, Zona 1
Ciudad de Guatemala , GUATEMALA

Fax: + 502 221 4423

Salutation: Dear President/Estimado Señor Presidente

Minister of the Interior

Sr. Byron Barrientos
Ministro de Gobernación
Ministerio de Gobernación
6ª Avenida 4-64, Zona 4
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: + 502 362 0239/ 362 0237

Salutation: Dear Minister/Estimado Señor Ministro

Fiscal General de la República

Lic. Adolfo González Rodas
Ministerio Público
8a. Avenida 10-67 Zona 1
Tercer nivel
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: + 502 221 2718

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Estimado Señor Fiscal General de la República

COPIES TO:

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Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala
Tel/Fax: + 502 932 0036/0037
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Newspapers

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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 21 May 2001.