

8 May 2001

Further information on UA 265/00 (AMR 34/35/00, 5 September 2000) - Fear for safety

GUATEMALA Members of FAMDEGUA including Aura Elean Farfán (f), Otto Villanueva (m), Victoria Tuvin (f) and Luis Aldana (m) [new name]

Members of HIJOS

On 4 May, two staff members with the *Familiares de Detenidos y Desaparecidos de Guatemala* (FAMDEGUA), Association of Families of the Detained and 'Disappeared' of Guatemala, were briefly abducted and threatened. This latest incident heightens Amnesty International's concern for the safety of all FAMDEGUA members.

As FAMDEGUA Director Aura Elena Farfán and driver Luis Aldana left their offices in Guatemala City on the morning of 4 May to go to a meeting, they were approached by two armed men, who forced their way into the car, took control and drove off. They repeatedly threatened Aura Elena Farfán and Luis Aldana that they would kill them if they screamed or sought to attract help. They inspected the two FAMDEGUA workers' identity documents and questioned them about their work and FAMDEGUA. They told them "we have been watching you" ("*Los hemos estado controlando*") and "we know you both have money but that's not what we want" ("*Sabemos que los dos llevan pisto pero eso no es lo que queremos*"). About forty-five minutes later, they released Aura Elena Farfán and Luis Aldana in different part of the city and drove away in FAMDEGUA's car.

FAMDEGUA is one of Guatemala's oldest human rights groups, and has played a key role in initiating proceedings to bring to justice those responsible for massacres and other human rights abuses committed during the country's 36-year civil war. In September 2000, the offices shared by FAMDEGUA and HIJOS, another human rights group, were raided by unidentified armed men, who threatened the staff and took away important files and computers. In the wake of the attack, the offices of FAMDEGUA were to have been under constant police protection to ensure their safety. However, the abduction of two staff members in front of the FAMDEGUA offices in broad daylight calls into question the quality of the protection they have received.

Human rights organizations and advocates are increasingly being targeted in Guatemala, and have fallen prey to a recent spate of office break-ins, death threats, and intimidating acts. Amnesty International is concerned that these acts form part of a campaign of intimidation aimed at silencing human rights defenders and undermining their work.

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

- urging the authorities to take immediate and effective measures to investigate the May 4 abduction of Aura Elena Farfán and Luis Aldana;
- repeating your call for the authorities to guarantee the safety of FAMDEGUA members, including Aura Elena Farfán and Luis Aldana;
- expressing concern that any measures taken to guarantee FAMDEGUA's safety in response to the September 2000 attack on their offices have proved ineffective, and insisting that more serious measures now be taken;
- calling on the authorities to bring to justice those responsible for the abduction of Aura Elena Farfán and Luis Aldana, and the raid of FAMDEGUA's offices.

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 Senor Presidente

Minister of the Interior

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

Telegram: Ministro Gobernación, Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax:+ 502 362 0239/ 362 0237

Salutation: Dear Minister / Estimado Senor Ministro

Attorney General

Lic. Adolfo Gonzalez Rodas
Fiscal General de la República
Ministerio Publico
8a. Avenida 10-67
Zona 1, Tercer nivel
Ciudad de Guatemala
GUATEMALA

Telegram: Fiscal General, Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax:+ 502 221 2718

Salutation:Dear Attorney General / Estimado Senor Fiscal General

COPIES TO:

FAMDEGUA
2a Calle "A" 7-13, Zona 2
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Fax:+ 502 220 3785

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 19 June 2001.