

PUBLIC

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UA 192/01

Fear for safety

30 July 2001

GUATEMALA

**Anselmo Roldán Aguilar [m]
Other members of the Association for Justice and
Reconciliation (AJR)**

Amnesty International is deeply concerned for the safety of a human rights defender, his colleagues and family, following a recent knife attack.

Anselmo Roldán is the president of the *Asociación Justicia y Reconciliación (AJR)*, Association for Justice and Reconciliation, and also President and legal representative of the *Asociación de Defensa de los Derechos Humanos del Area Ixcán (ADDHAI)*, the Human Rights Association of the Ixcán region.

At approximately 19.30 in the evening of 22 July 2001, Sr Roldán was attacked with a knife by a male resident of the Cuarto Pueblo community, Playa Grande, Ixcán. The attacker had repeatedly threatened Sr Roldán and other witnesses who are filing lawsuits against Guatemalan military officers for genocide during the civil war.

Sr Roldán said that the attacker tried to stab him in the heart. His left arm was stabbed as he defended himself. As the attacker was about to strike again, Sr Roldán's son came to his assistance. The attacker fled to a nearby house belonging to members of the ruling *Frente Republicano Guatemalteco (FRG)* party, the Guatemalan Republican Front, which is led by retired General Ríos Montt, the current president of Congress. Some neighbours tried to turn the suspect over to the *Policía Nacional Civil*, (National Civil Police), but those in the house drove them off and threatened to shoot them.

The attacker later escaped and is known to be in Pueblo Nuevo del Ixcán. No order for his arrest has been issued despite Mr. Roldán reporting the incident to the authorities, including the police and the local state prosecutor's office (*Ministerio Público*), on the day of the attack.

Sr Roldán has been released from hospital. He is recovering but will need additional medical assistance.

Before this attack, on 3 July, the same person threatened to "kill" (masacrar) Sr Roldán and three other witnesses. Members of the AJR have reported other incidents including surveillance by soldiers dressed in civilian clothes, threats and attempts to break into the homes of witnesses' family members. The monument to Cuarto Pueblo's massacred victims has also been vandalised. In late May, Sr Roldán's daughter received a threatening visitor who said that he had witnessed a firearm being handed over to the suspect at the military base in Playa Grande and said this was to kill her father.

On 28 June, Domingo Us Quixán, a member of the AJR from one of the communities that filed a law suit against General Romeo Lucas García last year, was murdered (see UA 168/01, 6 July 2001, AMR 34/024/2001).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The AJR represents about a hundred witnesses from Cuarto Pueblo and 20 other highland villages which suffered massacres under the military regime of General Romeo Lucas García (1978-1982) and de facto President Efraín Ríos Montt (March 1982-August 1983). The AJR have been legally assisted by the *Centro para Acción Legal en Derechos Humanos (CALDH)*, Legal Centre for Action on Human Rights, who filed a lawsuit for the crime of genocide against General Romeo Lucas García on 2 May 2000, and another one against Efraín Ríos Montt on behalf of the AJR on 6 June 2001 (see UA 141/01, 6 June 2001, AMR 34/077/2001).

Mr. Roldán and the other witnesses members of the AJR recently presented a criminal complaint against former President Efraín Ríos Montt (current President of Congress) and his High Military Command, alleging genocide, other

crimes against humanity and war crimes committed between March and December of 1982.

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 Anselmo Roldán Aguilar and his family, as well as those witnesses who belong to the Association for Justice and Reconciliation or the Association of Human Rights of Ixcán;
- requesting that the authorities undertake an immediate and thorough investigation of the assault on Sr Roldán and of the previous threats, and to prosecute those responsible for these criminal acts;
- expressing concern for the safety of all witnesses, investigators and activists at CALDH and other non-governmental organisations who are working to bring those responsible for human rights abuses during Guatemala's civil conflict to justice.

APPEALS TO: *(Please note that it can be difficult getting through to some of these fax numbers. Please be patient and keep trying. If a voice answers say: "fax por favor" and wait for the signal)*

President of the Republic of Guatemala

Lic. Alfonso Portillo Cabrera

Presidente de la República
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Telegrams **Presidente de la República, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala**

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

Telegrams: Ministro de Gobernación, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Salutation: Dear Minister/ Estimado Señor Ministro

Minister of Defence

Gral. Eduardo Arevalo Lacs

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Salutation: Dear Minister/ Estimado Señor Ministro

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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 10 September 2001.