

UA 315/00

Fear for

**GUATEMALA Workers at the *Procuraduría Auxiliar de Derechos Humanos* (PDH) office
in Sololá
People participating in planned demonstrations**

Killed: Teodoro Saloj, demonstrator

Officials working for a public human rights office in Sololá have been intimidated by police and others after they began investigating the recent killing of a demonstrator. Amnesty International is concerned for their safety, and for the safety of those participating in demonstrations planned during the next few weeks.

Since they began looking into the killing of Teodoro Saloj, workers at the *Procuraduría Auxiliar de Derechos Humanos* (PDH), Human Rights Procurator Regional Office, have reportedly been questioned in a intimidating manner by the police and have been followed by a white pick-up truck. An unidentified man has apparently been asking for the PDH official who was present at the time of the killing. The PDH believes that its workers are being intimidated because they are trying to publicize their findings on the killing.

Teodoro Saloj was killed on 10 October, seemingly with the acquiescence of the police. At the time, he was participating in a march protesting at the authorities' failure to implement land reforms agreed under the 1996 Peace Accords. Nearing the district of Cantón Las Trampas, Chichicastenango, Quiché, the demonstrators reportedly saw two unidentified pick-up trucks parked at a crossing which they had to pass through. As Teodoro Saloj and three other demonstrators approached the trucks, unidentified gunmen in one of the cars opened fire and shot him in the head. The two pick-up trucks left after the shooting.

A PDH official heard the shots and saw a white pick-up truck with tinted windows at the scene of the shooting. She went to the nearest check point, asking for an ambulance and telling the *Policía Nacional Civil* (PNC), National Civil Police, to chase the pick-up trucks. The officer in charge refused, saying that they had strict orders not to move. She then asked the police to contact a PNC helicopter patrolling the demonstration, but the police again refused. Three and a half hours later, the *juez de paz*, judge of the criminal court of first instance, arrived at the scene and ordered Teodoro Saloj's body to be brought to Quiché for examination.

More demonstrations are planned throughout the country to call for the 1996 Peace Accords to be implemented, particularly as regards land and indigenous issues, and for a number of Congress members to be expelled and stripped of immunity because of their involvement with the illegal alteration of a law on alcohol taxes.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Recently, tension in Guatemala has escalated and human rights defenders have increasingly been threatened or abused. Instead of trying to calm the situation and protect those at risk, the authorities have issued a number of statements, accusing human rights and other activists of seeking to de-stabilise the country. They have also suggested that human rights organizations risk being attacked by unknown forces, in effect declaring "open season" on activists.

(See UA 314/00, UA 310/00, UA 265/00, UA 256/00, UA 223/00, UA 212/00, and UA 199/00)

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

- urging the authorities to take all the steps necessary to guarantee the workers at the *Procuraduría Auxiliar de Derechos Humanos* (PDH) office in Sololá;
- expressing concern that Teodoro Saloj was killed seemingly with the complicity or acquiescence of the police;
- calling for a full and prompt investigation to be carried out into the killing, clarifying why the National Civil Police did not chase the perpetrators, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that law enforcement officials do not use excessive force in responding to demonstrations planned for the following weeks, and that they take all necessary steps to ensure the safety of demonstrators.

APPEALS TO:

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: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister

Director General of the National Civil Police

Sr. Rudio Lección Mérida
Director General de la Policía Nacional Civil
6ª Avenida 13-71, Zona 1
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Fax: + 502 251 9382
Salutation: Señor Director / Dear Director

Minister of Foreign Relations

Lic. Gabriel Orellana
Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
Avenida Reforma 4-47, Zona 10
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Fax: + 502 3317938
Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Procurator Office in Sololá

Procurador Auxiliar de Derechos Humanos de Sololá
Procuraduría Auxiliar de Derechos Humanos de Sololá
5ª Avenida 8-20, Zona 1
Sololá, Sololá, GUATEMALA
Fax: + 502 762 3642
Salutation: Estimado Procurador / Dear Procurator

National Indigenous and Peasant Coordinator

Coordinadora Nacional Indígena y Campesina (CONIC)
8 Calle, 3-18 Zona 1 3er. Nivel, Oficina H
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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 27 November 2000.