

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of "disappearance"

17 March 1995

GUATEMALA

Alexander Yovani GÓMEZ VIRULA, trade unionist

Alexander Yovani Gómez Virula was last seen at about 7.30pm on 13 March 1995, some 800 metres from his home on the road to Atlántico, from Guatemala City.

His family has been unable to find him in detention centres or hospitals, and there are fears that he may have been abducted in connection with his trade union activities. When he went missing, he was on his way home from the headquarters of *Unión Sindical de Trabajadores de Guatemala* (UNSI TRAGUA), Guatemalan Workers Union.

Alexander Gómez was financial secretary of the *Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Empresa R.C.A.*, R.C.A. Workers Union. R.C.A. was a "maquiladora" or assembly-line factory, the type of operation which has been moved from countries such as the United States to those like Mexico and Guatemala in order to keep labour costs down. In August 1994, the R.C.A. factory closed down. The workers believe that the owners carried out the closure in order to destroy the union, and they occupied the factory in protest. They also charged that the owners had not complied with their legal responsibilities to the workers in the event of such a closure. The occupiers were subsequently evicted by a court order.

Some 70 workers are continuing the protest, pressing to have their rights to work and to organize a trade union recognized.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Those attempting to organise trade unions in Guatemala have been a long-term target of human rights violations including extrajudicial execution and "disappearance." In a recent incident which occurred on 28 February 1995, Débora Guzmán Chupén, a leader of the trade union of *L y L Modas*, a clothing assembly factory (*maquiladora de ropa*) in Amatitlán, went missing in similar circumstances to those of Alexander Gómez. It was later revealed that she had been abducted. Following her release, she reported that she had been drugged and threatened with death and that her captors had questioned her about her husband's trade union activities. Both she and her husband, Félix González, a trade union leader with the Lunafil textile factory had been subjected to earlier threats. (see UA 395/94, AMR 34/43/94, 3 November 1994 and follow-up (AMR 34/06/95, 9 March 1995).

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Alexander Yovani Gómez Virula, who has been missing since 13 March 1995;
- asking that his whereabouts be made known and that, if detained, his detention be acknowledged and he be given access to his family and legal representation;
- asking for guarantees for his safety and for the safety of other workers from the R.C.A. factory in Guatemala City.

APPEALS TO

Note: when sending faxes, it is best to try very early in the morning, or very late at night, Guatemala time; if you get a voice answer, ask "me da tono de fax, por favor".

- 1) President of the Republic:

S.E. Ramiro de León Carpio
 Presidente de la República de Guatemala
 Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Telegrams: Presidente de León Carpio, Guatemala, Guatemala
Faxes: + 502 2 537472/515667
Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente /Dear President

2) Minister of Interior:
 Lic. Carlos Enrique Reynoso
 Ministro de Gobernación,
 Ministerio de Gobernación
 Despacho Ministerial, Of. No. 8
 Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Telegrams: Ministro de Gobernación, Guatemala, Guatemala
Faxes: + 502 2 515368 / 518105
Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

3) Minister of Labour and Social Welfare:
 Sra. Gladys Morfin
 Ministro de Trabajo y Previsión Social
 Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social
 Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Telegrams: Ministra de Trabajo y Previsión Social Guatemala, Guatemala
Faxes: + 502 2 513559 / 532345
Salutation: Sra. Ministro / Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Fiscal General
 Lic. Ramses Cuestas Gómez
 Fiscal General de la Nación
 Ministerio Público
 18 Calle 10-36, Zona 1
 Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Human Rights Procurator
 Lic. Jorge García Laguardia
 Procurador de los Derechos Humanos
 12 Avenida 12-72
 Zona 1, Guatemala
 GUATEMALA

Trade union
 Unión Sindical de Trabajadores de Guatemala (UNSI TRAGUA)
 11 Calle 8-14, Zona 1
 Oficina 34, Tercer Nivel
 Guatemala, GUATEMALA

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 2 May 1995.