

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 34/09/95

Distr: UA/SC

UA 79/95      Fear of "disappearance" / Fear of extrajudicial execution      27 March 1995

**GUATEMALA**                      **Arnoldo Xi, indigenous peasant**

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On 23 March 1995, Arnoldo Xi, an indigenous peasant and member of the indigenous organization *Coordinadora Nacional Indígena y Campesina (CONIC)*, National Indigenous and Peasant Coordination, was shot and abducted. His whereabouts remain unknown and there are serious fears for his safety.

At about 5.00pm on 23 March, Arnoldo Xi and another man were walking by the road near the community of Matucuy, Purula, department of Baja Verapaz, when heavily armed men in a red car approached and opened fire. Arnoldo Xi was hit, dragged into the car and driven away. Arnoldo Xi's companion escaped uninjured and reported the attack to CONIC. Arnoldo is the Vice-President of the *Comité de Pro-Mejoramiento de Tixila*, Committee for the Improvement of Tixila, in Purula.

The attack took place in the context of a land dispute between members of the Tixila community and a local landowner, who wants the peasants to leave land he claims to own. The peasants, who have been working the land for several years, are challenging the landowner's title to the property. On 22 March the landowner cut the water supply in an effort to force the peasants off the land. CONIC believe that armed private security guards employed by the landowner are responsible for the shooting and abduction of Arnoldo Xi. Private security guards often operate with the cooperation and acquiescence of the official security forces; frequently they are licensed by the National Police.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Since former Human Rights Procurator, Ramiro de León Carpio, took over the presidency of Guatemala in May 1993, human rights violations including extrajudicial executions, "disappearances," arbitrary arrests, torture, and an increasing incidence of harassment and death threats have continued. This is despite the government's purported commitment to respect and promote human rights and to take firm action against impunity, as affirmed in a human rights accord agreed by the government and the armed opposition in March 1994. Victims have included women and children, indigenous leaders and activists, human rights monitors, journalists, students, trade unionists, jurists and politicians. Those responsible remain largely unpunished and there has been no evidence of any genuine efforts to investigate the vast majority of violations that occurred under previous administrations.

Currently, peasants, many of them indigenous, have occupied lands in various areas of Guatemala which they have title to, or which they have worked for many years. Before they began occupying such land, much of it had lain fallow for years. Rather than investigating the peasants' claims, there are fears that the authorities intend to have them forcibly removed from such properties.

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

- expressing serious concern about the shooting and subsequent abduction of indigenous peasant Arnoldo Xi on 23 March 1995, and for his current safety;

- asking that, if in detention, he receive medical treatment, his whereabouts be made known and that he be given access to legal representation and his family;
- calling for an immediate investigation into the incident and that those responsible be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate steps to ensure that this and other current land disputes in Guatemala are peacefully settled, in order that no human rights violation are committed by security forces trying to forcibly remove occupiers.

**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) 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 51 53 68**  
**Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister**

2) Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Nutrition

Sr. Luis Arturo del Valle,  
 Ministro de Agricultura, Ganadería y Nutrición  
 Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería y Nutrición  
 Palacio Nacional  
 Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Faxes: +502 2 53 68 07**  
**Telegrams: Ministro de Agricultura, Guatemala, Guatemala**  
**Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister**

3) President of COPREDEH

Dr Vicente Arranz  
 Comisión Presidencial Coordinadora de la Política del Ejecutivo en Materia de Derechos Humanos (COPREDEH) (Head of the Presidential Coordinating Commission of the Policies of the Executive relating to Human Rights)  
 15 Avenida 18-38, Zona 13,  
 Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Telegrams: Dr Arranz, COPREDEH, Guatemala, Guatemala**  
**Faxes: +502 2 341514; 341524; 341585**  
**Salutation: Dr Arranz / Dear Sir**

**COPIES 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

Coordinadora Nacional Indígena y Campesina (CONIC)  
Apartado Postal 7-B, Sucursal el Trebol,  
C.P. 01-903  
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 17 May 1995.