

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Possible extrajudicial execution

6 May 1993

GUATEMALA: Tomás Lares Cipriano

Amnesty International is deeply concerned at the apparent extrajudicial execution on 30 April 1993 of Tomás Lares Cipriano, a member of the indigenous activist group Consejo de Comunidades Étnicas "Runujel Junam" (CERJ), Council of Ethnic Communities "We are all Equal", and of the largely indigenous peasant group, Comité de Unidad Campesina (CUC), Committee for Peasant Unity. The organization fears that other members of CERJ, a long-term target of human rights violations, may be in renewed danger of abuses such as threats, torture, "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution.

According to information received by Amnesty International, Tomás Lares was an active community leader of his village, Chorraxá, Joyabaj, El Quiché. He had organised many demonstrations against the military presence in his area and against the ostensibly voluntary, but in fact obligatory, service which peasants render to the so-called Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil (PAC), "civil patrols." He had also reportedly filed a large number of complaints regarding threats to the local population from military commissioners, Comisionados Militares, who act as civilian agents for the military, as patrol chiefs and as soldiers. Because of his activities, Tomás Lares was reportedly under permanent surveillance, and had received a number of threats.

On 29 April 1993, the day before he was shot and killed, he had organised a demonstration in Joyabaj, calling on the military to stop pressuring people to participate in the PACs and to respect the physical security of several communities in Joyabaj which had recently decided to stop carrying out the patrols. He was shot as he was travelling from Chorraxá to another village in the area.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

CERJ was formed in July 1988 to protect indigenous people's rights. It has been particularly active in protesting at peasants being forced to join the ostensibly voluntary PACs. Article 34 of the Guatemalan Constitution, which recognizes the right to freedom of association, states that no-one may be forced to serve on self defence groups. The authorities maintain the patrols are voluntary, but Amnesty International knows of scores of cases where peasants who have not wished to do patrol service have been labelled "subversives" by the army and subjected to harassment, death threats, "disappearances" and extrajudicial execution. The abuses have been carried out by uniformed soldiers as well as by men in plain clothes believed to be members of the security forces or acting under their orders.

CERJ has, since its foundation, been the target of a wide range of human rights

violations. CERJ leaders and members together with their families, have repeatedly been characterized as "guerrillas", or as having links with them. The group's leadership, particularly its president Amílcar Méndez Urrízar, have frequently received death threats. Since its formation, at least 17 members are known to have been killed in circumstances suggesting official involvement.

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

- expressing grave concern at the apparent extrajudicial execution of CERJ activist Tomás Lares Cipriano on 30 April 1993, the seventeenth killing of a CERJ member since its formation known to Amnesty International;

- asking that an investigation be immediately initiated into the circumstances of his death and that those found to be responsible be brought to justice;

- calling for guarantees for the physical security of all CERJ members and their families.

APPEALS TO

1) President of the Republic:

S.E. Jorge Serrano Elías
Presidente de la República de Guatemala
Palacio Nacional
Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente /
Dear President**

Telegrams: Presidente Serrano, Guatemala, Guatemala

Telephone: + 502 2 21212, + 502 2 22266

Faxes: + 502 2 537472, + 502 2 519702

Telexes: 5331 CAPRES GU

2) Minister of Defence:

Gral. José García Samayoa
Ministro de Defensa
Ministerio de Defensa
Palacio Nacional
Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Salutation: Sr. Ministro /
Dear Minister**

Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa, Guatemala, Guatemala

Faxes: + 502 2 537472

Telexes: 5361 COMGUA GU

3) Minister of the Interior:

Lic. Francisco Perdomo
Ministro de Gobernación
Ministerio de Gobernación
Palacio Nacional
Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Salutation: Sr. Ministro /
Dear Minister**

Telegrams: Ministro de Gobernacion, Guatemala, Guatemala

Telephone: + 502 2 21212 ext. 500, + 502 2 518105-6 (direct)

Telexes: 5085 MINGOB

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

1) Head of the Presidential Coordinating Commission of the Policies of the Executive relating to Human Rights:

Sr. Bernardo Neumann, Presidente
Comisión Presidencial Coordinadora
de la Política del Ejecutivo en
materia de Derechos Humanos (COPREDEH)
15 Avenida 18-38, Zona 13
Guatemala, GUATEMALA

3) Council of Ethnic Communities "We are all Equal":

Consejo de Comunidades Étnicas, CERJ
5a Avenida 3-13,
Santa Cruz del Quiché
El Quiché
GUATEMALA

2) Human Rights Procurator:

Lic. Ramiro de Leon Carpio
Procurador de Derechos Humanos
12 Avenida 12-72, Zona 1
Guatemala, Guatemala

4) Peasant Organization:

Comité de Unidad Campesina (CUC)
Apartado Postal 61-231
Lisboa y Roma
Colonia Juárez
C.P. 06600 México D.F.
MEXICO

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 June 1993.