

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear for Safety

28 May 1993

GUATEMALA: 11 Journalists under threat of arrest

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of 11 journalists from the country's main newspapers. According to reports received by Amnesty International the journalists have appeared on a list of people for whom arrest warrants have been issued. Some of those named write for the newspapers, *Diario Siglo XXI*, *Diario Prensa Libre*, *Diario El Gráfico* and *Diario La Hora*. Another on the list is described as the General Secretary of the Media Union, (*Secretario General del Sindicato del Consejo Nacional de Defensa al Periodista*). One is described as a correspondent for Reuter's news agency.

On 25 May 1993 Guatemala's elected president, Jorge Serrano, announced that he had taken certain measures, including partial suspension of the Constitution, suspension of the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Court, dissolution of Congress, and replacement of the rule of law by rule of decree. There were unlawful attempts to arrest leading officials such as the Human Rights Procurator, the President of Congress, the President of the Supreme Court and the acting Attorney General. The offices of a number of the country's major newspapers were surrounded by military troops who prevented newspaper staff from distributing their newspapers. Both radio and television transmissions are reported to have been subjected to censorship.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

These moves have come in the wake of large-scale protests in the capital, Guatemala city. Amnesty International is concerned that targeted groups, including journalists, trade unionists and student leaders and those working with non-governmental organizations, particularly those attempting to investigate and protect human rights, may now be even more vulnerable to human rights violations. These groups of people have been long-term targets of abuses in Guatemala, including harassment, threats, torture, "disappearances", and extrajudicial executions. Amnesty International is also concerned that government officials carrying out human rights initiatives will also be at risk.

For more information about the current threat to human rights in Guatemala please see UA 172/93, AMR 34/30/93 of 27 May 1993.

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

- demanding immediate guarantees that all human rights protected in Guatemala's constitution will be observed;
- demanding that the physical security of the journalists for whom arrest warrants have been issued be guaranteed and calling for the immediate and unconditional release of anyone arrested for their consciously held beliefs and who are known not to have used or advocated violence;
- calling on the government to immediately reestablish the functions of the judiciary, public ministry and legislature designed to protect human rights;
- calling for the rights to freedom of expression to be observed.

#### APPEALS TO

- 1) President of the Republic:

S.E. Jorge Serrano Elías  
Presidente de la República  
de Guatemala  
Palacio Nacional  
Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Telegrams:** Presidente Serrano, Guatemala, Guatemala  
**Telephone:** (502) (2) 21212, 22266  
**Faxes:** (502) (2) 537472, 519702  
**Telexes:** 5331 CAPRES GU

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

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2) Minister of Defence:  
Gral. José García Samayoa  
Ministro de Defensa  
Ministerio de Defensa  
Palacio Nacional  
Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Telegrams:** Ministro de Defensa, Guatemala, Guatemala  
**Faxes:** (502) (2) 537472  
**Telexes:** 5361 COMGUA GU

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

3) Minister of the Interior:  
Lic. Francisco Perdomo  
Ministro de Gobernación  
Ministerio de Gobernación  
Palacio Nacional  
Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Telegrams:** Ministro de Gobernación, Guatemala, Guatemala  
**Telephone:** (502) (2) 21212 ext. 500, 518105-6 (direct)  
**Telexes:** 5085 MINGOB

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

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

**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

**Newspapers:**

**Diario "Prensa Libre"**

13 Calle 9-31  
Zona 1, Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Diario Siglo XXI**

7a Avenida 11-79  
Edificio Galerias España, 6o piso  
Zona 9, Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Diario El Gráfico**

14 Avenida 9-18

Zona 1  
Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Newspaper:**

**Diario 'La Hora'**

9a Calle "A" 1-56

Zona 1, Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Press Association:**

**La Asociación de Periodistas  
de Guatemala**

14 Calle 3-29

Zona 1, 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 9 July 1993.