

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 297/94 Extrajudicial execution / Fear for safety 12 August 1994

GUATEMALA Pascual Serech, 45, and his family

Pascual Serech was shot and badly wounded by three armed men on 1 August 1994 in Panabajal, Comalapa, Chimaltenango Department. He died two hours later in the Chimaltenango General Hospital. Amnesty International is concerned for the security of Pascual Serech's family following the attack.

The shooting took place some 30 metres from Pascual Serech's house. Pascual Serech, a Cakchikel, (one of Guatemala's indigenous groups) was on his way to the capital to sell strawberries, his means of livelihood.

Pascual Serech had been a member of the local Panabajal Human Rights Commission, active in pressing for an end to forced service in the so-called Civil Patrols (purportedly voluntary civilian adjuncts to the Guatemalan army, in which Indian villagers are in fact forced to serve), and for an end to the forced military recruitment of village youths. He had also campaigned for an end to the many human rights abuses, including "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions which the military have reportedly carried out in his area. Villagers believe that the local *comisionado militar* (military commissioner, a civilian agent of the army, serving under army command), and his two sons were involved. The military commissioner in question had allegedly been responsible for many human rights violations in the area over the thirty years that he has been military commissioner for Panabajal.

Neighbours report that prior to the attack the victim's house was allegedly under surveillance by armed men in plain clothes. It is also reported that military commissioners from the surrounding area, soldiers and ex-soldiers come regularly to Panabajal, firing their guns into the air, and generally intimidating the villagers. There are therefore fears for the security of Pascual Serech's family.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Indigenous people make up the majority of Guatemala's population. During the height of the army counter-insurgency campaign of the late 1970s and early 1980s, they were among the principal targets of army attacks as the military sought to remove any form of potential logistical support to the armed opposition operating in the Guatemalan countryside.

A human rights accord was signed on 29 March 1994 in Mexico City, by representatives of the Guatemalan Government and the armed opposition coalition, the *Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca* (URNG), Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity. Under the agreement, a final accord to bring an end to Guatemala's long internal conflict is to be reached by the end of the year after further agreements are reached on a number of topics, including indigenous rights. However, despite the March human rights accord and the ongoing negotiations, members of the many indigenous rights groups that have been formed in recent years have, like Pascual Serech, continued to be the victims of abuses carried out by the Guatemalan military and their civilian adjuncts, the civil patrols and military commissioners.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- calling for inquiries into the apparent extrajudicial execution of Pascual Serech, and that those responsible be brought to justice;
- urging that steps be taken immediately to ensure the physical security of Pascual Serech's family and that those responsible for threatening and harassing them and other residents of Panabajal be brought to justice;
- urging compliance by the Guatemalan security services with the terms of the human rights accord signed by the government in March, under which it undertook to protect and promote human rights and to take firm action against impunity.

APPEALS TO

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 347364 / 527 472
Telexes: 5331 CAPRES GU
Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente /Dear President

2) Minister of Interior:

Lic. Danilo Parrinello Blanco
 Ministro de Gobernación
 Ministerio de Gobernación
 Despacho Ministerial, Of. No. 8
 Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Telegrams: Ministro de Gobernación, Guatemala, Guatemala
Faxes: + 502 2 515 368 / 518 105
Telexes: 5085 MINGOB
Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

3) Minister of Defence:

Gral. Mario Enríquez Morales
 Ministro de Defensa
 Ministerio de Defensa
 Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa, Guatemala, Guatemala
Faxes: + 502 2 21906/515252
Telexes: 5361 COMGUA GU
Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Indigenous rights group
 Defensoría Maya
 32 ave., 1-56
 Zona 7,
 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 29 September 1994.