

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Ill-treatment

24 July 1992

GUATEMALA:

Indigenous peasants

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Amnesty International is concerned at the ill-treatment by Guatemalan riot police during a legal and peaceful demonstration by indigenous peasants in front of the National Palace on 21 July 1992. Many people, including the elderly and children were reportedly kicked and beaten with clubs and many others were arrested, when the National Police tried to prevent demonstrators from congregating in the *Parque Central* (Central Park) in front of the National Palace as they tried to hand in a petition to President Serrano.

According to information received by Amnesty International, over 500 families from the *Finca* (farm) Pampas del Horizonte, in the village of Cajolá, Quetzaltenango department peacefully occupied the square in front of the National Palace on 21 July 1992 following a march, which had been authorized.

National Police in riot gear reportedly attempted to deny the peasants access as they neared the National Palace. The *Procuradora Adjunto de los Derechos Humanos* (Assistant Human Rights Procurator), Lic. María Eugenia de Sierra intervened after verifying the validity of the authorization for the march, and the demonstrators were allowed to proceed. However, at approximately 4.45pm, as the march reached the Central Park, riot police reportedly attacked the demonstrators, beating anyone in their path. The peasants, including old people and children, were reportedly brutally kicked and beaten with clubs.

Teargas was also fired directly into the crowd. Many of the injured were taken to hospital. Others were reportedly arrested by police.

Although Amnesty International recognizes the law-enforcement duties of the security forces, it is deeply concerned at reports that individuals have been injured as a result of the apparent arbitrary use of excessive force by police personnel during the demonstration.

Interior Minister Fernando Hurtado Prem, responsible for the police in Guatemala, resigned on 23 July 1992 following widespread condemnation of the police action.

The peasants were demanding government action in a dispute over land dating back to 1986 when the peasants invaded land in Cajolá to which they claimed legal title. A court subsequently turned down their claim and the peasants were evicted from the land. Since then the peasants have continued to demand that the land be returned to them.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

President Jorge Serrano Elías came to power in January 1991. During his presidential campaign he had pledged to ensure protection of human rights. However, Amnesty International remains seriously concerned at continuing human rights violations in Guatemala, including extrajudicial executions, death threats, torture and "disappearances". Even in cases where the identity of

the perpetrators is unclear, the choice of victim and the manner in which the abuses have been carried out frequently suggest the involvement of members of the official security forces.

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

- expressing concern at the reported excessive use of force by riot police belonging to the National Police against peaceful demonstrators, during which many people were injured, some requiring hospitalization;
- asking that there be an immediate and impartial investigation into the

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conduct of the riot police, and that those found responsible of excessive use of force be prosecuted;

- asking about the legal situation of those arrested and urging that they be treated humanely in detention, and that they be granted access to their families and to legal counsel.

**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,  
+ 502 2 22266**

**Faxes: + 502 2 537472,  
+ 502 2 519702**

**Telexes: 5331 CAPRES GU**

**Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr.**

**Presidente / Dear President**

**Guatemala, Guatemala**

**Telephone: + 502 2 21212,  
+ 502 2 2226**

**Telexes: 5361 COMGUA GU**

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

2. Minister of Interior:

Señor Ministro de Gobernación  
Ministerio de Gobernación  
Despacho Ministerial, Of. No. 8  
Palacio Nacional  
Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Telegrams: Ministro de  
Gobernación, Guatemala, Guatemala**

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

**Faxes: + 502 2 518105**

**Telexes: 5085 MINGOB**

**Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear**

**Minister**

3. Minister of Defence:

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

**Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa,**

4. Head of the National Police

Lic. José María Meléndez  
Director General de la Policía  
Nacional  
6 Avenida 13-71  
Zona 1, Guatemala  
Guatemala

**Telegrams: Director General de la  
Policia Nacional,  
Guatemala, GUATEMALA**

**Faxes: + 502 2 27521**

**Salutation: Sr. Director / Dear Mr  
Director**

5. President of the Human Rights  
Commission of Congress:

Lic. Oliverio García Rodas  
Presidente Comisión de Derechos  
Humanos  
Congreso Nacional de la República  
9 Av. 9-48, Zona 1  
Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Telegrams: Presidente Comision de  
Derechos Humanos**

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

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

Human Rights Procurator:  
Lic. Ramiro de León Carpio  
Procurador de los Derechos Humanos  
Avenida Simeón Cañas 10-60 Zona 2,  
Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Newspaper:  
Diario Prensa Libre  
13 Calle 9-31, 50 Nivel  
Edificio Prensa Libre  
Zona 1, Guatemala  
GUATEMALA

Trade union

Unión Sindical de Trabajadores de  
Guatemala  
(UNSI TRAGUA)  
11 Calle 8-14, Zona 1  
Oficina 34, 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 4 September 1992.