

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 128/91 Attempted Abduction/Possible Extrajudicial Execution

GUATEMALA: Amílcar MÉNDEZ URÍZAR
Camilo AJQUÍ JIMÓN, aged 26

Amnesty International is concerned about the reported attempted abduction on 15 April 1991 of Amílcar Méndez Urízar, the leader of the Consejo de Comunidades Etnicas "Runujel Junam" (CERJ), Council of Ethnic Communities "We are all Equal", and the apparent extrajudicial execution on 14 April 1991 of CERJ member, Camilo Ajquí Jimón.

Amílcar Méndez was about to get into his car on the Calzada (Avenue) Roosevelt in Zone 11 of Guatemala City, at 7.30 am on 15 April, when he was approached by four men in civilian clothing, wearing dark glasses. Two of the men attempted to seize him, but he managed to escape when people in the vicinity intervened. One of the men reportedly told Amílcar Méndez that he was going to die. Amnesty International is concerned for his safety, as well as for the safety of other CERJ members.

At approximately 8.30pm on 14 April 1991, CERJ member Camilo Ajquí Jimón was dragged out of his home in Potrero Viejo, Zacualpa, department of El Quiché, by three unidentified men. His wife tried to follow the men out of the house, but was told by the men to go back inside the house or she would be killed.

Camilo Ajquí was taken behind the house and killed apparently with knives. His attackers removed a piece of skin from his scalp after nearly decapitating him.

Amnesty International believes that the attackers may have been members of the security forces or civilian agents acting under the command of the armed forces and that Camilo Ajquí's killing is linked to his membership of CERJ.

In April 1989, uniformed members of the armed forces abducted four members of CERJ, from the same village, Potrero Viejo. They subsequently "*disappeared*".

(See "*Disappearance*" of Agapito Pérez Lucas, Nicolás Mateo, Luis Ruiz and Macario Pu Chivalán, AI Index: AMR 34/32/90, of May 1990 for further information). Camilo Ajquí, who was a neighbour of one of the "*disappeared*" CERJ members, Luis Ruiz Luis, was a member of a CERJ delegation who subsequently met with government officials in Santa Cruz, department of El Quiché and Guatemala to press for an investigation into the whereabouts of the four "*disappeared*" CERJ members.

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 in the ostensibly voluntary Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil (PAC) Civil Defence Patrols. Article 34 of the Guatemalan Constitution, which recognizes the right to freedom of association, states that no-one may be forced to serve in 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 or have tried to withdraw from them, have been labelled "*subversives*" by the army and subjected to harassment, death threats 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. Since March 1990, at least 8 members are known to have been killed in circumstances suggesting official involvement. This figure includes the recent killing of Camilo Ajquí Jimón and two further members of CERJ who have been killed since the new government of President Jorge Serrano Elías took office on 14 January 1991.

On 17 February 1991, two CERJ members were killed and one critically wounded in Chepol, municipality of Chichicastenango, department of El Quiché, after being attacked, according to witnesses, by two members of the PAC. Despite the fact that several arrest warrants have been issued against them, the alleged perpetrators remain at large. (see UA 61/91, AI Index: AMR 34/07/91 of 18 February 1991 - Possible Extrajudicial Execution of Juan Perebal Morales, Juan Perebal Xirum and wounding of Diego Perebal Leon)

In his inaugural speech President, Jorge Serrano Elías had promised to "cumplir y a hacer que se cumpla la ley sin discriminaciones" ("*comply with and see that the rule of law is complied with without discrimination*") and stated that "quien viole la ley será castigado, sin importar su jerarquía, su fuero o el monto de su riqueza" ("*those who break the law would be sanctioned irrespective of their position, rank or wealth*").

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at the reported attempted abduction of CERJ leader, Amílcar Méndez Urizar;
- asking for guarantees for his safety and for those of other CERJ members;
- asking for an immediate and impartial investigation into the circumstances surrounding the killing of CERJ member, Camilo Ajquí Jimón;
- urging that the results of the investigation be made public and that those found to be responsible for his killing be brought to justice;
- requesting information about the progress of the investigations into the killing and wounding of the Perebal family and the killing of Sebastián Velásquez Mejía and the reasons why the arrest warrants issued against the PAC members implicated in these killings have not been implemented.

APPEALS TO:

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 Guatemala

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**Telegrams: Presidente Serrano,
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Gral. Luis Francisco Mendoza García

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and to diplomatic representatives of Guatemala in your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 30 May 1991.