
£GUATEMALA

@Apparent Extrajudicial Execution of Francisco Chacón Torres

JUNE 1991

AI INDEX: AMR 34/24/91

DISTR: SC/CO/GR

Amnesty International is concerned at the alleged extrajudicial execution of a 15-year-old street child, Francisco Chacón Torres, shot dead by two private policemen in Zone 9 of Guatemala city on 28 April 1991.

Street children carrying the coffin of Francisco Chacón Torres

Francisco Chacón Torres was walking in Zone 9 of Guatemala City at approximately 1.00am on the morning of Sunday 28 April 1991, with another street child, when they heard shots. Both boys started running because the shots appeared to come from the immediate vicinity. It was then that Francisco was hit by a bullet which entered through his left eye. He died instantly. The two uniformed private policemen allegedly responsible for the shooting then fled. Both policemen were reportedly guarding a nearby synagogue at the time the shooting took place. According to friends of Francisco Chacón, he had previously been threatened by these same private policemen who told him "te vamos a quebrar" ("we are going to break you"). Private security firms operate under licence from the National Police and the Ministry of Interior (Gobernación). The killing was denounced to the Juzgado de Paz (Justice of the Peace) and the Sección de Homicidios de la Policía Nacional (Homicide Division of the National Police) by the Legal Office of Covenant House (Casa Alianza), a refuge for street children in Guatemala. Amnesty International is pressing for full investigations into the killing of Francisco Chacón Torres, and for those found responsible to be brought to justice.

BACKGROUND

Over the past year, Amnesty International has received an escalating number of reports of human rights violations against street children in Guatemala City, including beatings, torture, "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions, reportedly carried out by official security force agents, particularly the police, acting sometimes in plain clothes and

sometimes in uniform. In other cases abuses have been carried out by agents of private security firms. In July 1990, Amnesty International published Guatemala: Extrajudicial Executions and Human Rights Violations against Street Children (AMR 34/37/90), which documented many of these cases.

Covenant House, in a recent press release, denounced the continuing violations against street children and stated that the killing of Francisco Chacón brings to 15 the number of street children murdered in the past few months. 39 legal suits against more than 50 National Police, are currently pending with the Guatemalan courts and only in isolated cases have investigations resulted in the prosecution and conviction of those responsible. (See Criminal Proceedings: Human Rights Violations against Street Children, AI Index: AMR 34/20/91 of May 1991). Children who have witnessed or given information concerning abuses directed against other street children have been subjected to reprisals. Those people working with street children have also been subjected to harassment and intimidation. In a recent incident, Axel Mejía, a worker in Covenant House, received a series of threatening phone calls against his life. Axel Mejía is a key witness to the beating of three street children by 18 members of the security forces in Guatemala city in November 1990. (See Urgent Action 499/90, AI Index: AMR 34/78/90, 13 December 1990 and AMR 34/15/91 of 2 May 1991).

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Francisco Chacón Torres pictured in his coffin