

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety

GUATEMALA

Members of *Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio* (HIJOS), Children for Identity and Justice against Oblivion and Silence
Members of the *Movimiento Indígena, Campesino, Sindical y Popular* (MICSP),
Popular Union, Peasant and Indigenous Movement

The offices of two organisations opposed to the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) have been the target of raids in the capital Guatemala City, in which confidential information about their work and membership was stolen. Amnesty International believes that the members of these organisations may be in danger.

On 8 May, there was a break-in at the office of the *Coordinadora Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas* (CNOC), National Coordinator of Peasant Organisations. The organisation is a member of the *Movimiento Indígena, Campesino, Sindical y Popular* (MICSP), Popular Union, Peasant and Indigenous Movement, an umbrella organisation opposed to CAFTA. Fifteen computers with sensitive information stored in their hard drives were stolen from the CNOC office, while other valuable equipment was left behind. The information stolen included details of the activities of MICSP against CAFTA, and the way MICSP is organised, as well as CNOC's records of land conflict cases and their membership database.

Following this raid, CNOC moved into the offices of the *Instituto de Estudios Comparados en Ciencias Penales de Guatemala* (ICCPG), Institute of Comparative Studies in Criminal Sciences of Guatemala. This office was raided on 10 May in an apparent attempt to intimidate the staff of CNOC. Nothing was taken in the raid. On the same night two other member organisations of MICSP suffered break-ins, though in one case the intruders ran away after realising staff were still working in the building.

During the night of 11 May, there was a raid on the offices of *Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio* (HIJOS), Children for Identity and Justice, against Oblivion and Silence. Though the organisation primarily works on behalf of children whose parents "disappeared" in armed conflict situations, HIJOS has also been actively opposed to CAFTA. The back doors of the office were forced and the raiders examined the organisation's files. Two computers containing sensitive information about the organisation's work were taken during the raid. A brand new computer with no information stored on it was among valuable office equipment left behind in the raid, suggesting that this was not a common burglary.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

CAFTA was signed by the governments of Guatemala, other Central American countries, the Dominican Republic and the USA in May 2004. Among other things the protestors allege it will destroy local agriculture and restrict local production of medicines, while allowing US multinationals increased access to Guatemalan markets. CAFTA was ratified by the Guatemalan Congress on 13 March. Despite nationwide protests against CAFTA on 14 March, the following day President Oscar Berger sanctioned it. Police and army officers allegedly used excessive force against the demonstrators, resulting in the death of at least one protestor, while many others were injured and at least 20 people were detained. Forty-seven leaders of MICSP are reportedly being investigated by the Public Prosecutor's Office for their activities during the demonstrations (see AI press release, AMR 34/012/2005, 16 March 2005).

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

-expressing concern at the recent series of raids on the offices of *Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio* (HIJOS) and member organisations of *Movimiento Indígena, Campesino, Sindical y Popular* (MICSP), in which sensitive information was taken;

- expressing concern for the safety of staff and members of these organisations;

-calling on the authorities to take immediate measures, in accordance with the organisations' wishes, to guarantee their safety;

-calling for an immediate, impartial and thorough investigation into the break-ins, for the results to be made public and for those responsible to be brought to justice;

- reminding the authorities of the right of human rights defenders to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties.

APPEALS TO:

Attorney General

Fiscal General de la República y jefe del Ministerio Público (Public Prosecutor's Office)

Juan Luis Florido

8a. Avenida 10-67, Zona 1, Antiguo Edificio del Banco de los Trabajadores,
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax: + 502 2251 2218

Salutation: Estimado Fiscal General/Dear Sir

Minister of the Interior

Ministro de Gobernación

Carlos Vielman

6a. Avenida 4-64, zona 4, nivel 3. Ciudad de Guatemala. Guatemala

Fax: + 502 2362 0237

Email: ministro@mingob.gob.gt

Salutation: Señor Ministro/ Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Procurador

Procurador de los Derechos Humanos

Dr. Sergio Fernando Morales Alvarado

Procuraduría de los Derechos Humanos (PDH)

12 Avenida 12-72, zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax: +502 7775 5476 (ask for the fax tone: "El tono de fax, por favor")

Email: opdhg@inteln.net.gt

Salutation: Señor Procurador/ Dear Sir

Nacional Coordinator of Peasant Organisations

Coordinadora Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas (CNOC)

5 calle, 1-61 zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Email: acnoc@inteln.net.gt

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 24 June 2005.