

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/death threats

29 September 2005

GUATEMALA Edwin Eliseo Paxtor Crisóstomo (m), journalist

Journalist Edwin Paxtor has suffered intimidation and death threats. These have escalated since he reported the alleged assault of four youths by members of the Criminal Investigation Service of the National Civil Police, *Servicio de Investigación Criminológica* (SIC) *de la Policía Nacional Civil* (PNC) in July, in the Department of Chiquimula, Southeast Guatemala. He also alleges that members of the SIC have been obstructing his work for the last two years.

The most recent threat against him occurred at approximately 2.30am on 23 September when Edwin Paxtor received an anonymous telephone call, informing him that a murder had taken place and giving him directions to the alleged crime scene at an isolated location. He felt suspicious and asked a friend to check whether such a murder had occurred. None was found to have taken place.

On 16 September, Edwin Paxtor's daughters returned home to find a man standing by the house who made threatening gestures to them. The day before, on 15 September, his car was followed by a red Toyota Corola with tinted windows. On 12 September he had been followed by a black four-wheel drive.

At approximately 1pm on 11 September, Edwin Paxtor's daughter answered his mobile phone. An unknown man asked her "are you the daughter or wife of that son of the great bitch", "*es la hija o la esposa de ese hijo de la gran puta*". Edwin took the phone from her and the man told him "your days are counted", "*teneis los dias contados*". When he asked why, he was told, "son of bitch your days are counted, we are going to kill you", "*hijo de puta teneis los dias contados, te vamos a matar*". The threats were reported to the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office, *Procuraduria de Derechos Humanos*, who referred them to the local judge.

Edwin Paxtor hosts the news programme on Chiquimula's local cable television, and is the regional correspondent for the national media outlets *Prensa Libre*, *Noti7* and *Radio Cadena Sonora*.

On 27 July, his report in the newspaper *Prensa Libre* described how plain clothed agents from the SIC had physically assaulted four youngsters. The SIC agents had accused them of driving a stolen vehicle, which in fact turned out to be registered to one of the young men.

On 11 July, Edwin Paxtor was one of the journalists assaulted with machetes by former members of the Civil Defence Patrols (*Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil* PAC), while filming a demonstration in Chiquimula. The assault was condemned by Reporters Without Borders.

Edwin Paxtor has informally complained to the Departmental Governor of Chiquimula on several occasions about the alleged SIC harassment. On one occasion the Department Governor accompanied him to an assignment, so that he would not be prevented from taking photographs. The Governor has reportedly discussed the situation with members of the SIC, who have reportedly told him that Edwin Paxtor "...never has anything good to say about them", "*a nosotros nunca nos tira una flor*". At the beginning of September, Edwin Paxtor had an informal conversation about his situation with the Special Attorney for Crimes Against Journalists and Trade Unionists (*Fiscal Especial de Delitos Contra Periodistas y Sindicalistas*). The conversation was reportedly overheard by a member of the National Civil Police. Since then his work has reportedly been also obstructed by other members of the PNC other than SIC.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Edwin Paxtor and his family following escalating intimidation and death threats;
- calling on the authorities to take immediate measures, in accordance with the journalist's own wishes, to guarantee their safety;
- calling on the authorities to take immediate measures to guarantee Edwin Paxtor can carry out his work as a journalist without obstruction or harassment;
- calling for an immediate and thorough investigation into the death threats and other harassment of Edwin Paxtor, with the results be made public and those responsible brought to justice;

APPEALS TO:

District Attorney

Fiscal Distrital

Lic. Rodolfo Gonzalo Hernandez Garzaro

8 Avenida y 6 Calle A Esquina Zona 1 Chimquimula, Departamento Chiquimula, GUATEMALA

Fax: + 502 7942 0669

Salutation: Estimado Fiscal / Dear Attorney

Director of the Office of Professional Responsibility of the National Civilian Police

Director de la Oficina de Responsabilidad Profesional - PNC

Israel López de León

15 Avenida 2-95, Zona 6, Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: +502 22894743

Salutation: Estimado Director / Dear Director

COPIES TO:

Governor of Chiquimula

Gobernador de Chiquimula

Boris Roberto España Caceres

Gobernación Departamental, 6 Avenida Entre 3 y 4 Calle,

Chiquimula, Departamento Chiquimula, GUATEMALA

Fax: + 502 7942 0282 (if voice answers, say "el tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Estimado Gobernador / Dear Governor

Head of Police in Chiquimula Department (Comisaria 23)

Comisario Hector Rodriguez Quiroa

8 Avenida y 6 Calle A Zona 1, Chiquimula, Departamento Chiquimula, GUATEMALA

Fax: + 502 7942 0120 (if voice answers, say "el tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Estimado Comisario / Dear Governor

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 10 November.