

PUBLIC

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21 September 2006

UA 251/06      Fear for safety/death threats

**GUATEMALA**      **Roly Escobar Ochoa (m), member of the National Coordination of Marginalised Communities and Areas of Guatemala (*Coordinadora Nacional de Pobladores y Áreas Marginadas de Guatemala*, CONAPAMG)  
Other CONAPAMG members**

**Killed:**              **Carmen Sagastume (f), member of CONAPAMG**

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Roly Escobar Ochoa, a member of the National Coordination of Marginalised Communities and Areas of Guatemala (*Coordinadora Nacional de Pobladores y Áreas Marginadas de Guatemala*, CONAPAMG), has been threatened. This appears to be an attempt to dissuade the organisation from demanding justice for the murder of CONAPAMG member Carmen Sagastume. Amnesty International believes that the lives of Roly Escobar and his colleagues may be in danger.

Carmen Sagastume, who campaigned on behalf of women for CONAPAMG, was killed on 18 August. At 6am that day, two men knocked on her front door and asked for her husband, a senior member of CONAPAMG. She answered that he was not at home. The men shot her dead.

On 9 September, Roly Escobar received information of plans to kill him. In response to his attempts to publicise the killing of Carmen Sagastume, two unidentified individuals allegedly spoke of plans to kill him. Witnesses saw these two unidentified individuals putting loaded guns into a car and driving off. The witnesses then telephoned Roly Escobar to warn him, leading Roly Escobar to leave his home and go into hiding. CONAPAMG later identified one of the two men who allegedly talked of killing Roly Escobar as one of those whom they consider to be a suspect in the killing of Carmen Sagastume.

On 12 September, a hearse was parked for several hours close to the headquarters of CONAPAMG. The same hearse had been used to transport the body of Carmen Sagastume. This was considered by CONAPAMG to be an act of intimidation.

On 14 September, from approximately 2am to 6am, a man wearing a black cap and black sweater stood outside the home of Roly Escobar. After some time, Roly Escobar's neighbours approached the man to ask what he was doing. As they approached him, the man covered his face and ran off.

On 20 September, from approximately 2am until 6am, two men wearing dark clothing stood outside the house of the former wife of Roly Escobar and their children. Roly Escobar phoned the police but they did not come to investigate.

Both the killing of Carmen Sagastume and the threats against Roly Escobar are being investigated by the Public Prosecutor's Office and the National Civil Police. Amnesty International understands that to date no significant progress has been made in either investigation.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

CONAPAMG works on issues of access to housing, public services and ownership legislation for poor urban and rural communities across Guatemala. On 4 July 2004 their office was broken into, and files, bills, computer files and money was stolen. In March 2005, Miguel Zapeta González, resident and leader of the community

"Esquipulas" in zone 21 of Guatemala City, and a member of CONAPAMG, was killed. Nobody has been brought to justice for these crimes. The communities affiliated to CONAPAMG are frequently evicted and there are reportedly more evictions pending.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Roly Escobar Ochoa, as well as other members of CONAPAMG;
- urging the authorities to carry out a prompt, impartial and thorough investigation into the death threats received by Roly Escobar and the killing of Carmen Sagastume, with the results of the investigation to be made public, and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to guarantee the safety of Roly Escobar Ochoa and other members of the CONAPAMG, in accordance with their own wishes;
- reminding the authorities that human rights defenders have a right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

**APPEALS TO:**

Minister of Interior

Ing. Carlos Roberto Vielmann Montes

Ministro de Gobernación

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

**Fax: +502 2362 0237 / 2361 5902 / 2362 0020 (ask for: "tono de fax, por favor")**

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

Attorney General

Licenciado Juan Luis Florido

Fiscal General de la República y Jefe del Ministerio Público

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

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Fax: + 502 2251 2218**

**Salutation: Dear Sir: Estimado Fiscal General**

**COPIES TO:**

CONAPAMG

6a Avenida, 14-33, 4o Nivel, Oficina 402, Edificio Bris

Zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala, 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 2 November 2006.