

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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EXTRA 04/93

Threats/Harassment

8 January 1993

GUATEMALA: Bruce Harris, Executive Director of Covenant House for Latin America and other staff members of Covenant House

Amnesty International is seriously concerned at an incident which took place in Guatemala City on 6 January 1993, involving a member of staff at the Legal Office of Covenant House (Casa Alianza), José Mariano Girón Villatoro, during which an unidentified man asked about the return to Guatemala next week of Bruce Harris, the Executive Director of Covenant House for Latin America. The circumstances of this incident would seem to indicate that the security forces were involved and that it was an act of intimidation against Bruce Harris. British-born Bruce Harris, who lives in Mexico, is returning to Guatemala on 13 January 1993, along with the President of Covenant House. Amnesty International is concerned for his safety, as well as for the safety of all the workers at Covenant House in Guatemala.

On the morning of 6 January 1993 José Mariano Girón Villatoro was leaving his home for the office when he noticed a pick-up vehicle with two men with their heads under the bonnet apparently fixing the engine. As he arrived at 18th street and 12th Avenue in Zone 1 a man approached him, greeted him as if he knew him and asked when Bruce Harris would be returning. When José Mariano Girón replied that he did not know, the man followed him and said "*Yo sé que Bruce viene la próxima semana*" ("I know that Bruce will be coming next week").

José Mariano Girón jumped on a bus and saw the man who had approached him being picked up by the vehicle that had been parked outside José Girón's home. The vehicle then began following the bus. José Mariano Girón got off the bus at National Police headquarters and went inside. He emerged a few minutes later only to find the same man along with one other waiting outside police headquarters. He was picked up by a friend and both left by another entrance, but were not followed.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since over two years ago when Covenant House began denouncing human rights violations against street children in Guatemala City, including beatings, torture, "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions, reportedly carried out by official security force agents, its workers have been consistently targeted by the security forces. Street educators and others working with street children have been subjected to harassment and intimidation, either because of their work protecting street children from abuse, because they have denounced human rights violations against the street children or because they have provided evidence as witnesses in judicial proceedings against members of the security forces with human rights violations against street children. (see Guatemala: Children in Fear, AI Index: AMR 34/24/92 of May 1992).

As recently as 15 December 1992, the Covenant House Crisis Centre received an anonymous telephone call telling them that there was a bomb planted in the building and that it would soon explode. However, after a search of the building no bomb was found.

In early May 1992 the receptionist at Covenant House received an anonymous telephone call telling her that she had been sentenced to death if she did not leave Covenant House. The previous month an unidentified man went to the gate of the Covenant House refuge and threatened to plant a bomb and kill all the children. (See UA 156/92, AMR 34/25/92 of 12 May 1992). In mid-July 1991, four unidentified armed men stopped outside the Crisis Centre, and one of them shouted that they were going to shoot Bruce Harris and take photographs of all the staff and were going to shoot them and the children. (See UA 246/91, AMR 34/31/91 of 18 July 1991).

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RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in Spanish, English or in your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Bruce Harris, Executive Director of Covenant House for Latin America, due to return to Guatemala on 13 January 1993;
- asking for guarantees for his safety and for the safety of all those working with Covenant House;
- asking that a thorough investigation be carried out into the repeated instances of harassment and threats against Bruce Harris and the staff of Covenant House and that those responsible be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO

1) President of the Republic:

S.E. Jorge Serrano Elías
Presidente de la República de Guatemala
Palacio Nacional
Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegrams: Presidente Serrano, Guatemala,

Guatemala

Telephone: +502 2 21212, +502 2 22266

**Faxes: +502 2 537472,
+502 2 519702**

Telexes: 5331 CAPRES GU

**Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/
Dear President**

2) Minister of Interior:

Lic. Francisco Perdomo
Ministro de Gobernación
Ministerio de Gobernación
Despacho Ministerial, Of. No. 8
Palacio Nacional
Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Telegrams: Ministro de Gobernación,
Guatemala, Guatemala**

**Telephone: +502 2 21212 ext. 500,
+502 2 518105-6 (direct)**

Faxes: +502 2 518105

Telexes: 5085 MINGOB

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

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Casa Alianza (Covenant House)
Apartado Postal 2704
Zone 1, Ciudad de Guatemala

3) Head of the National Police:

Lic. José María Menéndez
Director General de la Policía Nacional
6 Avenida 13-71
Zona 1, Guatemala, Guatemala

Telegrams: Director General de la Policia

**Nacional, Guatemala,
Guatemala**

Faxes: +502 2 27521

**Salutation: Sr. Director General /
Dear Sir**

4) Head of the Presidential Coordinating Commission of the Policies of the Executive relating to Human Rights

Sr. Bernardo Neumann
Comisión Presidencial Coordinadora
de la Política del Ejecutivo en
materia de Derechos Humanos (COPREDEH)
15 Avenida 18-38, Zona 13
Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telephones: + 502 2 325041

+ 502 2 347364

Faxes: + 502 2 347364

**Salutation: Sr. Presidente /
Mr. President**

GUATEMALA

Newspaper:

Diario Prensa Libre

13 Calle 9-31, 50 Nivel

Edificio Prensa Libre

Zona 1, Guatemala

GUATEMALA

Human Rights Procurator:

Lic. Ramiro de León Carpio

Procurador de Derechos Humanos

Avenida Simeón Cañas 10-60 Zona 2,

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 20 January 1993.