

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 07/94 Fear for Safety/Torture

12 January 1994

GUATEMALA

Vicente GONZALEZ CANAHUI
Two indigenous girls, aged 14 and 16

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Vicente González Canahui, following his denunciation of an attack and threats to two young indigenous girls in el Cantón San Pedro, municipality of San Miguel Chicaj, department of Baja Verapaz.

According to reports, on 1 January 1994 the two young girls were approached by six armed men, including the local *Jefe de Comisionados Militares*, Head of Military Commissioners, not far from the *Mercado Municipal*, the central market of Cantón San Pedro. The men forced the girls to drink alcohol and then tried to take them away from the centre of town. When the girls resisted, the men reportedly fired into the air, threatened them and took them away by force. Neighbours apparently witnessed the events.

On 10 January 1994, Vicente González Canahui went, as a representative of the villagers, to the 4th detachment of Salamá in order to make a denunciation about these events. He was reportedly held for two hours and then taken by the captain of the detachment to the home of the two young girls, in Salamá.

The girls claimed that they had been raped. Vicente González was then taken to the local police station and asked to sign a statement written by the captain of the detachment which he had not read. He refused to sign the paper. He was apparently insulted and threatened for having made the denunciation and there are now serious fears for his safety.

The two girls have not made a denunciation to the courts for fear of reprisals.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 6 June 1993, Ramiro de León Carpio, previously the Human Rights Procurator, was voted president by Congress to serve out the remaining term of President Jorge Serrano Elías. Ex-president Serrano had been forced from office after trying to seize near-dictatorial powers on 25 May 1993. When President de León Carpio came to power there were expectations and hopes in certain quarters that he might be able to improve the human rights situation, due to his previous role as Human Rights Procurator. However, since he assumed office, incidents of threats and intimidation have continued.

The military commissioners, (the local Head of Military Commissioners was reportedly involved in the attack on the young girls) are civilian agents of the army, serving under army discipline. They act as local representatives of the army and as intermediaries between the army and the local community.

They are frequently in charge of organising the civilian defence patrols, and have law enforcement functions. They are stationed in every hamlet in Guatemala and one of their main tasks is to act as intelligence branch to the army.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Vicente González Canahui;
- urging that his physical safety be guaranteed;

- urging that those wishing to make denunciations be able to do so without being subjected to human rights violations and that all residents of Cantón San Pedro be guaranteed protection against threats, intimidation and human rights violations carried out by or under the direction of officials such as Military Commissioners.

APPEALS TO:

1) President of the Republic:

S.E. Ramiro de León Carpio
 Presidente de la República de Guatemala
 Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Telegrams: Presidente de León Carpio, Guatemala, Guatemala
Faxes: + 502 2 537472, + 502 2 519702
Telexes: 5331 CAPRES GU
Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente /Dear President

2) Minister of Interior:

Lic. Arnoldo Ortiz Moscoso
 Ministro de Gobernación
 Ministerio de Gobernación
 Despacho Ministerial, Of. No. 8
 Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Telegrams: Ministro de Gobernación, Guatemala, Guatemala
Faxes: + 502 2 518105
Telexes: 5085 MINGOB
Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

3) Minister of Defence:

Gral. Mario Enríquez Morales
 Ministro de Defensa
 Ministerio de Defensa
 Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa, Guatemala, Guatemala
Faxes: + 502 2 537472
Telexes: 5361 COMGUA GU
Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Human Rights Procurator:

Lic. Jorge García Laguardia
 Procurador de los Derechos Humanos
 12 Avenida 12-72, Zona 1,
 Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Faxes: + 502 2 81734

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

Lic. Jorge Gonzalo Cabrera Hurtarte
 Presidente
 COPREDEH
 15 Avenida 18-38, Zona 13
 Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Archbishop's Human Rights Office

Oficina de Derechos Humanos del
 Arzobispado de Guatemala (ODHAG)

Apartado Postal 723
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 23 February 1994.