

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety

GUATEMALA

**Manuel Calel Morales (m), coordinator of the Guiding Association which Leads the 'Land of Maize' People (Asociación Guía que Conduce al Pueblo Tierra del Maíz – Kamal B'e Rex Tinamit Ixim Ulew)**  
**Girl relative of Manuel Calel Morales**  
**Other relatives of Manuel Calel Morales**

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A girl who is also a relative of Manuel Calel Morales, coordinator of a non-governmental organization that campaigns against impunity, has survived a sexual assault and an attempt on her life. The lives of Manuel Calel Morales and his family may be at risk.

At around 8.30am on 17 February, Manuel Calel's relative (whose name has been suppressed to protect her identity) was kidnapped at gunpoint by an unknown man as she was leaving her home in a village in Quiché department. The girl was taken to a deserted area, where the man beat her up and attempted to rape her. The man made a telephone call in which he told someone that he had the girl. "You're going to pay for all [Manuel] is doing there in your town" (vas a pagar por todo lo que está haciendo [Manuel] all en tu pueblo), the attacker told her before throwing her, head first, into a well that was approximately eight metres deep. The girl managed to escape after more than 10 minutes. By then, the man had left.

On the same morning, between 9 and 9.30am, Manuel Calel received a call on his mobile phone. The male caller, presumably the attacker, said "here I've got [name of the girl]" (aquí tengo a [nombre de la niña]) twice and hung up. Two days later, on 19 February, Manuel Calel received three calls in which a man asked about the girl. The man refused to give his name and then hung up.

Manuel Calel is the coordinator of the Guiding Association which Leads the 'Land of Maize' People (Asociación Guía que Conduce al Pueblo Tierra del Maíz). Since the 1980s, he and his colleagues have campaigned for truth and justice for the crimes committed during the internal armed conflict (1960-1996). In particular, Manuel Calel has denounced killings, enforced disappearances and other human rights violations committed by Civil Defense Patrols (Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil), a civilian paramilitary force which operated under the instruction of the military, against Indigenous people.

More recently, Manuel Calel has also publicly denounced criminal gangs operating in his area. On 16 February, he filed a formal complaint against them before the local Public Prosecutor's Office. Some former Civil Defense Patrol members are also believed to be associated with these criminal gangs.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Approximately 200,000 people, most of them members of Mayan Indigenous groups, were killed or subjected to enforced disappearance during Guatemala's internal armed conflict (1960-1996). The country's Truth and Clarification Commission (Comisión de Esclarecimiento Histórico) attributed more than 90 per cent of all the human rights violations documented to the military and the Civil Defense Patrols.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Manuel Calel Morales, his relative attacked on 17 February and the rest of his family;
- urging the authorities to take immediate steps to provide effective protection to them, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- calling on the authorities to order a swift, full and impartial investigation into the kidnap, beating, attempted rape and attempted killing of Manuel Calel's relative, to make the results public and to bring those responsible 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 UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

**APPEALS TO:**

Minister of the Interior

Sr. Salvador Gándara

Ministro de Gobernación

6ª Avenida 13-71, Zona 1,

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Fax: +502 2413 8658**

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

Attorney General and Head of the Public Prosecutor's Office

Lic. José Amílcar Velásquez Zárate

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 2411 9124**

**+502 2411 9326**

**Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Estimado Sr. Fiscal General**

Human Rights Ombudsman's Office

Dr. Sergio Morales Alvarado

Procurador

Procuraduría de los Derechos Humanos

12 avenida 12-72, Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Fax: +502 2424 1714**

**Salutation: Dear Procurator/Estimado Sr. Procurador**

**COPIES TO:**

Manuel Calel Morales

c/o UDEFEGUA

1 calle 7-45, Oficina 2-b, 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 7 April 2009.