

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety

GUATEMALA

Aída del Rosario López Cordero (f), human rights defender

Human rights defender Aída del Rosario López Cordero, who has been involved in attempts to bring two police officers to justice for the rape of an indigenous woman, has been threatened and intimidated since the trial of one of the police officers began on 18 February.

Aída del Rosario López Cordero is the coordinator of the Women's Defence Office (*Defensoría de la Mujer*) at the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (*Procuraduría de Derechos Humanos*) in Quiché department. Since February 2007 she has been publicising the case of indigenous woman Juana Méndez, who was raped while in police custody in 2005. Two police officers were charged with aggravated rape and abuse of authority in 2007. One of the officers has been arrested, but the other is on the run.

The second hearing of the trial of the police officer took place on 25 February. That evening Aída López took a call on her mobile phone from a man who said, "You, defender of women, you bitch, I don't give a shit about you and your organizations" (*vos, defensora de la mujer, hija de la gran puta, vos y tus organizaciones me pelan la verga*).

On the night of 2 March "VC3 M18" was spray-painted on the walls of Aída López's house. "M18" is the name of a street gang in Guatemala. They also broke the lights at the entrance to her house and broke the bulbs of the lampposts on the street outside her house.

On 6 March at 4.24pm Aída López received a call on her mobile phone from a man who told her that he was an inmate of a Guatemala City prison and then hung up. She had never had any contact with inmates of the prison and her mobile number is only known by her relatives and close friends.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Human rights defenders in Guatemala work in constant danger of attack. In 2007, there were 195 reported attacks against them. The authorities frequently fail to provide them with adequate protection when they are threatened, do not investigate threats or attacks and do not bring those responsible to justice.

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

- expressing concern at the threats and intimidation suffered by Aída del Rosario López Cordero;
- calling on the authorities to order a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation and bring those responsible to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate and effective measures to guarantee her safety, in strict accordance with her own wishes;
- reminding the authorities that human rights defenders have the right 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. Carlos Vinicio Gómez Ruiz

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. 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 2411 9124

+502 2411 9326

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Estimado Sr. Fiscal General

COPIES TO:

Human rights organization

ICCPG

5a calle 1-49, Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax: +502 2230 1841

+502 2232 5121

Email: iccp@iccp.org.gt

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 25 April 2008.