

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear for Safety

11 April 1995

GUATEMALA

Rodrigo BATZ JUAREZ, aged 39

Rodrigo Batz Juarez, of indigenous Quiché/Mam origin, a teacher and human rights worker of peasant background was forced to leave his home in the Department of Retalhuleu at the end of March 1995, after a series of incidents, which he believes indicate his life is in danger.

On 28 March 1995, six heavily-armed men came to the community of Parcelamiento Santa Fe, Department of Retalhuleu, asking about the whereabouts of Rodrigo Batz Juarez. According to witnesses, the men, who were not known to the community, drove a black Toyota pickup, with darkened windows and without license plates.

Several days earlier neighbours reported seeing the same armed men arrive at the house of Rodrigo Batz Juarez. He was not at home at the time. One of the men reportedly walked towards the house with a pistol in his hand. After studying the house for a moment he rejoined the other men. All then stopped in the nearby cemetery firing their guns in the air.

Rodrigo Batz Juarez is a fieldworker in the Retalhuleu area for the *Centro Internacional de Investigaciones en Derechos Humanos*, Centre for Human Rights Research, which is based in Guatemala City, and collects and analyses information about past and present human rights violations in Guatemala. He has also worked as a volunteer literacy trainer, and is a member of the local presbyterian church, as well as a member of the executive committee of the church community group. He believes the men may have been targeting him for his work with the Centre for Human Rights Research.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Over the past two years, a large number of killings have been reported in the community where Rodrigo Batz lives. In November 1993, two young men, one of whom was identified as Arturo Hernández, were kidnapped. Their bodies were later found bearing signs of torture. In September 1994, six armed men forced a *campesino* (peasant), Santos Demesio Tipaz, from his home and shot him dead.

The victim's father, Demesio Tipaz, was later persecuted and forced to leave the area. No investigation was ever carried out into the killings. Rodrigo Batz reported that the perpetrators of the killings acted with total impunity.

He also reports that vehicles circulate at all hours of the night carrying armed men, who fire their guns as a means of intimidating the community. Local people are too frightened to denounce what is happening.

Since former Human Rights Procurator, Ramiro de León Carpio, took over the presidency of Guatemala in May 1993, human rights violations - including extrajudicial executions, "disappearances," arbitrary arrests, torture, and an increasing incidence of harassment and death threats - have continued. This is in spite of the government's purported commitment to respect and promote human rights and to take firm action against impunity, as affirmed in a human rights accord agreed in March 1994 between the government and the armed opposition group, *Unidad Revolucionara Nacional de Guatemala*, Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity. Victims have included human rights monitors like Rodrigo Batz, women and children, indigenous leaders and activists, journalists, students, trade unionists, jurists and politicians. Those

responsible remain largely unpunished and, in the vast majority of cases, there has been no evidence of any genuine effort to investigate violations that occurred under previous administrations.

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

- expressing concern at the acts of intimidation against Rodrigo Batz Juarez, reportedly because of his work with the Centre for Human Rights Research;
- asking that immediate steps be made to guarantee his safety and that of his family;
- urging an immediate and impartial investigation into the acts of intimidation and that those found responsible be brought to justice.

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 / 515667

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President

2) Minister of Interior

Lic. Carlos Enrique Reynoso
 Ministro de Gobernación,

Ministerio de Gobernación
 Despacho Ministerial, Of. No. 8
 Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegrams: Ministro de Gobernación, Guatemala, Guatemala

Faxes: + 502 2 515 368 / 518 105 [ask: "me da tono de fax por favor"]

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

Fax: + 502 2 537472

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

4) Commander of the Retalhuleu Military Base

Sr. Comandante
 Base Militar
 Retalhuleu
 GUATEMALA

Telegrams: Comandante, Base Militar, Retalhuleu, Guatemala

Salutation: Sr. Comandante / Dear Commander

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Fiscal General

Lic. Ramses Cuestas Gómez
Fiscal General de la Nación
Ministerio Público
18 Calle 10-36, Zona 1
Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Human Rights Procurator

Lic. Jorge García Laguardia
Procurador de los Derechos Humanos
12 Avenida 12-72
Zona 1, Guatemala
GUATEMALA

Human Rights Organization

Centro Internacional de Investigaciones en Derechos Humanos
1a Calle 4-37
Zona 1, Guatemala
GUATEMALA

and to diplomatic representatives of Guatemala accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or with your section office, if sending appeals after 23 May 1995.