

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/ Death threats

05 March 2003

GUATEMALA **María Isabel Escobar Donis (f)**]
 Ana Morales (f)] human rights defenders
 José Linares (m)]
 Jonathan Escobar (m)]
 Members of WATCH/Where are the Children?

Amnesty International is deeply concerned for the safety of the human rights defenders named above and members of *WATCH/Where are the Children?* following recent acts of intimidation and violence against them.

On the afternoon of 3 March as María Escobar and Ana Morales were returning to the *WATCH* office in zone 7 of Guatemala City, they were grabbed by three armed men. The men demanded María Escobar's keys and when she refused beat her with their guns. Whilst on the ground with a gun held to her head, one of the men reportedly yelled, "Kill her! Finish her off! Kill her now!" (*Matala! Terminala! Matala de una vez!*). The men took all her keys including those for her home and office, her identification documents and her money. Following the attack *WATCH* staff members who went outside the building to see if the documents had been abandoned, reported that men in a pickup truck with polarized windows drove by and pointed their guns at them.

In 2002, María Escobar's home was broken into. Her front door was removed and computer and disks were stolen. At the time she believed the incident to be common crime, but now fears that it may have been an effort to intimidate her.

Human rights defenders José Linares and Jonathan Escobar, who are both involved in the work of *WATCH*, were also attacked by armed men the week before María Escobar and Ana Morales. José Linares was attacked on 27 February and Jonathan Escobar was attacked and robbed on 28 February. At the time it was believed that the attacks were common crime. Amnesty International fears however that the attacks may represent a systematic effort to intimidate *WATCH* members and their colleagues, in order to stop them from carrying out their work as human rights defenders.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

WATCH was founded in 1999 and is dedicated to finding out what happened to thousands of children who where "disappeared" during the civil war in Guatemala. *WATCH* had recently relocated to new offices when the attack took place. In light of recent events, they have decided to once again relocate their offices.

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

- expressing concern for the safety María Isabel Escobar Donis, José Linares, Jonathan Escobar, and other members of *WATCH/Where are the children?*;
- urging the authorities to take immediate measures, in accordance with their wishes, to guarantee their safety;
- calling on the authorities including the Public Prosecutor's Office to carry out an immediate, exhaustive and impartial investigation into the threats against the human rights defenders;
- asking that the results of the investigations be made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- reminding the authorities that the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties

recognizes the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders and their right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals.

APPEALS TO:

Attorney General

Lic. Carlos David de Leon Argueta
Fiscal General de la Republica
Fiscalia General del Ministerio Publico
8a. Avenida 10-57, Tercer nivel
Zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala
Telegram: **Fiscal General de la Republica, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala**
Fax: **+ 502 221 2718**
Salutation: **Dear Attorney General/Senor Fiscal General**

Minister of the Interior

Lic. Adolfo Reyes Calderón
Ministro de Gobernación
6ª Avenida 4-64, Zona 4
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala
Telegram: **Ministro de Gobernación, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala**
Fax: **+502 362 0239 / 362 0237**
Salutation: **Dear Minister/Señor Ministro**

Director General of the National Civil Police

Comisario General Raul Arquimedes Manchame Leiva
Director General de la Policia Nacional Civil
6a Avenida 13-71, Zona 1
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala
Telegram: **Director General de la Policia, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala**
Fax: **+ 502 251 9382**
Salutation: **Dear Director/Señor Director**

Human Rights Procurator

Lic. Sergio Morales
Procurador de Derechos Humanos
Procuraduría de los Derechos Humanos
12 Avenida 12-72, Zona 1
Ciudad de Guatemala 01001, Guatemala
Telegram: **Procurador de Derechos Humanos, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala**
Telefax: **+502 230 0874-76-77-78 (if someone answers, say "tono de fax por favor")**
Fax: **+502 238 1734**
Salutation: **Dear Procurator/Señor Procurador**

COPIES TO:

Non governmental organisation

WATCH/Where are the children?
c/o Alianza Contra la Impunidad (AI)
1a Calle 0-11, Colonia El Sauce, Zona 2
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala
Telefax: **+ 502 232 2651 (if a voice answers, say "tono de fax por favor")**

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Special Prosecutor on human rights defenders

Lica. Tatiana Morales

Fiscalía de hechos delictivos contra miembros o grupos de Derechos Humanos y Derechos Indígenas

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Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax: +502 251 8768/ 230 2193/ 230 2257

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 16 April 2003.