

PUBLIC

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UA 137/06 Fear for Safety/Death Threats

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Members of the *Unidad de Protección de Defensoras y Defensores de Derechos Humanos* (UPDDH) and the *Movimiento Nacional de los Derechos Humanos* (MNDH) have recently been intimidated and have received death threats in what appears to be an effort to dissuade them from their work. Both organisations are involved in the defence of human rights and protection of human rights defenders. Amnesty International is concerned for their safety.

On 15 May at approximately 8:45am, a telephone call was received by a member of the MNDH. A male voice said “*si siguen buscando los vamos a matar*” “if you continue looking we are going to kill you”. Three days earlier on 12 May the same caller had said “*no se metan en mierda*” “don’t get involved in shit”.

On 11 May, a female caller had asked for specific information regarding who worked in the offices which MNDH and UPDDH share, their areas of work, as well as what investigations and research they are currently conducting. The caller was repeatedly asked her name and who she worked for but refused to give any information. While no direct threat was made, the tone and nature of the call was considered threatening by the staff at MNDH and UPDDH.

The UPDDH is currently providing support to a series of cases involving both individual human rights defenders and human rights organisations in the capital and the regions of Petén, Zacapa, Escuintla and Jutiapa. It is also involved in documenting cases of attacks against human rights defenders and lobbying the Government of Guatemala to investigate and bring to justice those responsible. The UPDDH and MNDH are also active in briefing international governments and organisations on the human rights situation in Guatemala. The MNDH is active in the *Frente Contra la Minería*, Front Against Mining and in implementing the recommendations of the UN *Comisión de Esclarecimiento Histórico*, Commission for Historical Clarification which investigated abuses committed during the internal armed conflict. The MNDH in recent months has been aiding the *Procuraduría de los Derechos Humanos*, Human Rights Ombudsman’s Office, in surveying, collating and organising thousands of pages of documents, uncovered in 2005, of the former National Police (replaced by the National Civilian Police in 1997). The documents are believed to contain information regarding numerous instances of human rights violations committed by members of the National Police during the internal armed conflict (1960 – 1996), including disappearances, kidnappings and torture.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Attacks against human rights defenders have increased over the past years. The UPDDH has documented 122 attacks against human rights defenders in 2004 and 224 in 2005. Between January and April 2006 the UPDDH registered 65 attacks. Amnesty International has consistently raised its concerns at the lack of

protection of human rights defenders and absence of investigation into attacks against them, with the Government of Guatemala.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of the staff at the *Unidad de Protección de Defensoras y Defensores de Derechos Humanos* and *Movimiento Nacional de Derechos Humanos*;
- calling for an immediate and thorough investigation into the death threats and other harassment of staff at the *Unidad de Protección de Defensoras y Defensores de Derechos Humanos* and *Movimiento Nacional de Derechos Humanos*, and that the results be made public and those responsible brought 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 United Nations Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

APPEALS TO:

Attorney General

Fiscal General de la República y Jefe del Ministerio Público

Licenciado Juan Luis Florido,

8a. Avenida 10-67, Zona 1, Antiguo Edificio del Banco de los Trabajadores,

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: + 502 2251 2218

Salutation: Estimado Fiscal General/Dear Sir

President

Presidente de la República de Guatemala.

Licenciado Oscar Berger Perdomo

Casa Presidencial, 6 a. Avenida, 4-18 zona 1. Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: +502 2221 4423 / 2239 0090

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Berger

COPIES TO:

Unidad de Protección de Defensoras y Defensores de Derechos Humanos

Movimiento Nacional De Derechos Humanos

1 Avenida 0-11, Zona 2

Colonia Lo de Bran

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: + 502 22322651 (if a voice responds, say "por favor, tono de fax")

Human Rights Ombudsman's Office

Procurador de los Derechos Humanos, Dr. Sergio Fernando Morales Alvarado

Procuraduría de los Derechos Humanos (PDH)

12 Avenida 12-72, zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: +502 7775 5476 (if voice answers, say "el tono de fax, por favor")

Email: opdhg@intelnet.net.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 27 June 2006.