

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 34/16/91
Distr: UA/SC

UA 161/91

Attempted Abduction

9 May 1991

GUATEMALA: Miguel SUCUQUÍ MEJÍA and family

Amnesty International is concerned at the alleged attempted abduction of Miguel Sucuquí Mejía and his family by members of the Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil (PAC), Civil Defence Patrols on the night of 6 May 1991, in the village of Sacpulup, Chichicastenango, El Quiché department.

At around midnight on the night of 6 May 1991, members of the civil patrol of Sacpulup, surrounded the house of Miguel Sucuquí, a member of the Consejo de Comunidades Etnicas "Runujel Junam" (CERJ), Council of Ethnic Communities "We are all Equal". The patrol leader then entered the Sucuquí home asking for the whereabouts of Miguel and after he found Miguel was not there, he threatened to kill Miguel's wife. (Miguel had managed to flee his home after being alerted that the patrollers were looking for him). Miguel Sucuquí later stated that the patrol leader threatened all the family and said that "sooner or later he would have his revenge on my family for all that had happened and even more so if we denounced this latest incident" ("que tarde o temprano tiene que vengarse con mi familia por todo lo que ha pasado y aún más si denunciabamos el presente hecho").

In March 1990, civil patrol members acting under army orders, attacked and wounded several members of the Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo (GAM), Mutual Support Group of relatives of the "disappeared", in Sacpulup. GAM members had gone to Sacpulup to support local people threatened by the army because they had refused to join the civil patrols. (See *Human Rights Violations in Chichicastenango, El Quiché, AI Index: AMR 34/21/90, March 1990*). Miguel Sucuquí subsequently denounced the civil patrol leader to the court for his participation in the attack, as a result of which the PAC leader spent two weeks in jail. Residents of Sacpulup believe that this latest incident appears to be an attempt by the civil patrol members to seek revenge for the jailing of the patrol leader.

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Miguel Sucuquí Mejía and his family, who have now sought refuge at the CERJ offices.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

CERJ was formed in July 1988 to protect indigenous people's rights. It has been particularly active in protesting at peasants being forced to join the ostensibly voluntary Civil Defence Patrols. Article 34 of the Guatemalan Constitution, which recognizes the right to freedom of association, states that no-one may be forced to serve in self-defence groups. The authorities maintain the patrols are voluntary, but Amnesty International knows of scores of cases where peasants who have not wished to do patrol service or have tried to withdraw from them, have been labelled "subversives" by the army and subjected to harassment, death threats "disappearances" and extrajudicial execution. The abuses have been carried out by uniformed soldiers as well as by men in plain clothes believed to be members of the security forces or acting under their orders.

CERJ has, since its foundation, been the target of a wide range of human rights violations. Since March 1990, at least 8 members are known to have

been killed in circumstances suggesting official involvement. This figure includes the recent killing of Camilo Ajquí Jiménez, on 14 April 1991 in Potrero Viejo, Zacualpa, department of El Quiché. (See UA 128/91, AI Index: AMR 34/13/91, of 18 April 1991).

President Jorge Serrano Elías took office in Guatemala in January 1991. During his presidential campaign he pledged to ensure the protection of human rights for all Guatemalan citizens. However, Amnesty International is seriously concerned at continuing human rights violations in the country since the new government took office. CERJ members have been particularly targeted under the new government and, since January 1991, three CERJ members and three relatives of CERJ members have been killed, and many more members intimidated and threatened by members of the security forces or those working under their command.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/telephone calls/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at the alleged abduction attempt against CERJ member, Miguel Sucuquí Mejía, by the leader and members of the local civil patrol;
- asking for guarantees for his safety, that of his family, and for that of other CERJ members;
- asking for an immediate investigation into the circumstances surrounding the attempted abduction and the death threats against the family of Miguel Sucuquí Mejía;
- urging that the results of the investigation be made public and that those found responsible be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

S.E. Jorge Serrano Elías
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 Guatemala

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Palacio Nacional

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Coronel Carlos Eduardo
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and to diplomatic representatives of Guatemala in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 20 June 1991.