

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety

08 June 2006

GUATEMALA

**Members of *Sector de Mujeres*, Women's Sector  
Members of *Unión Nacional de Mujeres Guatemaltecas* (UNAMG), National Union of  
Guatemalan Women**

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The offices of two women's organisations have been the target of raids, in which confidential information about their work and membership was taken. Amnesty International believes that the members of these organisations may be in danger.

On 5 June, the departmental office of the *Unión Nacional de Mujeres Guatemaltecas* (UNAMG), National Union of Guatemalan Women, in Chimaltenango, about one hour outside of Guatemala City, was broken into. Desks and filing cabinets were forced open and files were searched and then left scattered all over the office. The new computer which served the *Proyecto de de Víctimas de Actoras de Cambio*, Project for Victims to Actors for Change, designed for women survivors of the conflict years, was also stolen. UNAMG has been very active in lobbying in favour of a controversial family planning law which was finally approved in Congress in March 2006 and has also condemned the killings of women in Guatemala.

On 5 June, the office in Guatemala City of the *Sector de Mujeres*, Women's Sector, a group of non-governmental women's organizations, was broken into in a very similar fashion. Desks were forced open and filing cabinets which contained important information on the organisation's work on women were searched. Some computers and files containing information on the killings of women and family planning were also searched. Just days before, during the night of 29 May, the same office was also broken into. Mobile phones and a telefax machine were taken.

This is the second time the offices of the *Sector de Mujeres* have been raided. In 2004 precautionary measures were sought from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on behalf of *Sector de Mujeres*, following a break-in into their offices in June 2004 (see *No protection, no justice: killings of women in Guatemala*, AMR 34/017/2005, June 2005). The *Sector de Mujeres* has played a prominent role in calling for an end to violence against women in Guatemala and has provided legal advice and support in many cases of violence against women across the country.

Both the *Sector de Mujeres* and UNAMG are also members of the *Colectivo de Organizaciones Sociales* (COS), Collective of Social Organizations, which campaigns for economic and social rights, greater civil society participation and the implementation of the 1996 Peace Accords. COS has actively opposed the Central America Free Trade Agreement, ratified by Guatemala in March 2005.

Amnesty International fears that members of both organizations may be at risk as in some cases break-ins have preceded attacks or acts of intimidation against individuals. For example the office of the *Asociación Ixqik* – an organization that provides legal counsel on behalf of victims of sexual violence - in San Benito, El Petén, in north-eastern Guatemala, was broken into on three occasions in October and November 2005 and then on 11 January 2006, there was another attempted break-in. Just two months later, on 10 March four men knocked on the hotel door where a former member of the *Asociación Ixqik* in San Benito, Petén was staying saying that they had a police warrant to search the room. She could see through the room's window that two of the men were carrying high calibre weapons and that they were standing behind the other two men who were hotel employees. She called the police and when they arrived approximately 15 minutes later, the armed men ran away.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

During recent months there have been numerous break-ins against both women's organisations and other civil society organizations. Since the beginning of 2006 there have reportedly been at least ten break-ins at civil society organizations.

Women's organizations have becoming increasingly vocal in calling on the Guatemalan government to end the impunity for killings of women in Guatemala and have criticized the lack of response of government authorities in the face of escalating killings. During 2004 the police reported that 527 killings of women. In 2005 this figure was up to 665 killings. Between 1 January and 9 May 2006 the police reported 243 killings.

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

- expressing concern at the recent series of raids on the offices of *Sector de Mujeres* and the *Union Nacional de Mujeres Guatemaltecas*, in which sensitive information was taken;
- expressing concern for the safety of staff and members of these organisations;
- calling on the authorities to take immediate measures, in accordance with the organisations' wishes, to guarantee their safety;
- calling for an immediate, impartial and thorough investigation into the break-ins, for the results to be made public and for those responsible to be 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 Liberties.

### **APPEALS TO:**

#### Head of the Special Prosecutor's Office on Human Rights

Jefa de la Fiscalía de Sección de Derechos Humanos

Rosa Maria Salazar Marroquin

7a. Avenida 11-20, Zona 1, Segundo nivel

Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

**Fax: + 502 2230 5296 (if a voice responds, say "por favor, tono de fax")**

**Salutation: Estimada Fiscal/ Dear Madam**

#### Minister of the Interior

Ministro de Gobernación

Carlos Vielman

6a.Avenida 4-64, zona 4, nivel 3, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

**Fax: + 502 2362 0237**

**Email: ministro@mingob.gob.gt**

**Salutation: Señor Ministro/ Dear Minister**

### **COPIES TO:**

#### Women's Sector

Sector de Mujeres

6 Avenida A, 1-81, zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

#### National Union of Guatemalan Women

Unión Nacional de Mujeres Guatemaltecas

7ª Avenida 4-73, zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

**Fax:+ 502 2230 6049/2230 4851 (if a voice responds, say "por favor, tono de fax")**

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 20 July 2006.