

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 34/18/99

UA 110/99

Possible extrajudicial execution / Fear for safety

14 May 1999

GUATEMALA Fear for safety: Members of the *Frente Democrático Nueva Guatemala* (FDNG), New Guatemalan Democratic Front party

Killed: Roberto Belarimino González Arias - Deputy Secretary General, FDNG Executive Metropolitan Committee

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of an alliance of four left-wing parties, *Alianza Nueva Nación* (ANN), New Nation Alliance.

According to reports, Roberto González, Deputy Secretary General of the *Frente Democrático Nueva Guatemala* (FDNG), the New Guatemalan Democratic Front, a member party of the ANN, was shot and killed on 13 May 1999. As he left a meeting at his house in Guatemala City, four armed men drew up in a white pick-up truck and shot him at point-blank range at least seven times. Bélgica Contreras, one of the people with him, was also hit, and is now seriously ill in hospital.

The shooting follows the "disappearance" of Carlos Coc Rax, an indigenous leader, land rights activist and FDNG leader in El Estor, Izabal, on 21 April. (See UA 97/99, 30 April 1999, AMR 34/15/99)

Amnesty International has also received reports, so far unconfirmed, that Vinicio González Ponce, leader of the *Unidad de Izquierda Democrática* (UNID), Democratic Left Unity, another member party of the ANN, was killed by unknown gunmen on 1 May in Alta Verapaz department. On 20 April 1999 another UNID leader, Roberto Chun Caal, was reportedly attacked, and possibly killed, by unknown men. The following day Ernesto Bol, UNID's chief negotiator in the Cobán municipality of Alta Verapaz, was apparently kidnapped but later released.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The recently formed leftist ANN alliance plans to contest the polls in the Guatemalan general election scheduled for November 1999. Election years have always seen a surge in violence in Guatemala, and this year, as well as the general election, there will be a referendum on 50 planned constitutional changes.

The Guatemalan government signed a peace agreement with the *Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca* (URNG), Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity, in December 1996, aimed at building a "firm and lasting peace," including through guaranteeing freedom of association and strengthening the democratic process. The URNG is also now part of the ANN alliance.

Politicians have long been targets of human rights abuses in Guatemala, including harassment, torture, "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions. The attacks were exceptionally frequent in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In 1981 Amnesty International recorded the murder of at least 40 politicians, more than half of whom were municipal mayors or local government officials. Between January 1980 and January 1982 the organization documented some 70 extrajudicial killings and "disappearances" of opposition politicians.

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

- expressing concern at the killing of Roberto González;
- expressing concern at the harassment and threats to members of the ANN;

- urging the government to take steps to guarantee the safety of the members of the ANN members and leaders of all political parties;
- calling for an immediate and full investigation into these incidents, that the findings be made public and that those found responsible be brought to justice;
- please also approach politicians in your country asking them to send their own appeals making the above points and urging them to raise the matter in any of their dealings with Guatemala.

APPEALS TO:President of the Republic of Guatemala

S.E. Álvaro Arzú Irigoyen

Presidente de la República de Guatemala

Palacio Nacional, 6ª Calle y 7ª Avenida, Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala , GUATEMALA

Telegrams: Presidente, Guatemala, Guatemala**E-mails: alvaroarzu@guateconnect.com / alvaroarzu@guate.net****Faxes + 502 221 4537****Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Arzú**Minister of Interior

Lic. Rodolfo Mendoza Rosales

Ministro de Gobernación

Ministerio de Gobernación

Despacho Ministerial, Of. N° 8

Palacio Nacional, 6ª Calle y 7ª Avenida, Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegrams: Ministro Gobernación, Guatemala, Guatemala**Faxes: + 502 362 0239/232 1207****Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister**President of Congress

Sr. Leonel López Rodas

Presidente del Congreso

Nacional de la República

9ª Avenida 9-48, Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala , GUATEMALA

Faxes: + 502 232 4873/ 220 4024**Salutation: Señor President / Dear President****COPIES TO:**New Guatemalan Democratic Front

Frente Democrático Nueva

Faxes: + 502 232 3333Human Rights Procurator,

Lic. Julio Eduardo Arango Escobar

Procurador de los Derechos Humanos,

12 Avenida 12-72, Zona 1,

Ciudad de Guatemala , GUATEMALA

Faxes: + 502 238 1734 / 251 7769/253 5712Diario La Hora, 9ª Calle "A" 1-56, Zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA**E-mails: lahora@tikal.net.gt**

Faxes: + 502 251 7084

Diario Prensa Libre, 13 Calle 9-31, Zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Faxes: + 502 251 8768

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 25 June 1999.