

UA 173/96

Fear for safety

8 July 1996

**GUATEMALA Carlos Federico Reyes López, aged 26, anthropologist  
and his family**

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Amnesty International is deeply concerned for the safety of Carlos Federico Reyes López, member of the Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Team, *Equipo Guatemalteco de Antropología Forense*, and his family, following death threats against them.

On 12 June, an unidentified man sat next to Carlos Federico Reyes López while he was waiting on a bus in Guatemala City. The man held a gun to the anthropologist's ribs and told him that he ought to "stop being [working] with those friends, because it's dangerous and you ought to think about it..." "*que dejara de estar con esos amigos, porque era peligroso y que lo pensara*". The assailant pushed the gun into Carlos Federico Reyes López's ribs again and quickly got off the bus.

One week later, on 19 June, Carlos Federico Reyes López was surrounded by four unknown men in Zone 1 of Guatemala City. One of the men pushed the barrel of a gun into the anthropologist's back and told him, "we already know where you live, you have got one month to change your job because it's dangerous... Oh and of course your father is very ill" "*ya sabemos donde vivís, tenés un mes para cambiar de trabajo porque es peligroso... Por cierto tu papá está muy enfermo*". One of the assailants then told him that he would not like it if something happened to his father or the two young girls who live in the same house.

Carlos Federico Reyes López still feels very vulnerable and unsafe because although he reported these incidents to the appropriate government authorities, no one has yet been arrested in connection with the crimes.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Death threats against Federico Reyes come at a time when important developments are taking place regarding the identification of those responsible for the massacre of thousands of Guatemalans during counterinsurgency operations conducted by the armed forces in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

In March 1996, just a few months before these death threats, Carlos Federico Reyes López participated in the exhumation of a clandestine cemetery containing the remains of 19 victims, including at least six children, killed during a massacre in the village of Los Josefinos, municipality of La Libertad, in the northern department of El Petén on 29 April 1982. Reportedly at least 50 people died in the Los Josefinos massacre, which was allegedly carried out by members of the Guatemalan armed forces. The team of anthropologists, at the request of the Association of Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared in Guatemala, *Asociación de Familiares de Detenidos y Desaparecidos de Guatemala (FAMDEGUA)*, collected important and substantial evidence for use in future investigations into the massacre.

Amnesty International has documented repeated death threats against those involved in exhumations in Guatemala (see AMR 34/24/95). There are allegedly over 100 clandestine cemeteries in Guatemala where thousands of non-combatant civilians are believed to be buried. The majority of them are indigenous peasants who were killed or "disappeared" during counterinsurgency operations in the

late 1970s and early 1980s. None of those responsible for the gross human rights violations committed at this time have been brought to justice.

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

- expressing concern at the threats against Carlos Federico Reyes López and his family members, and urging the authorities to take immediate steps to guarantee their safety;
- urging the authorities to initiate investigations into the threats against Carlos Federico Reyes López and to ensure that the findings are made public and that those responsible are brought to justice;
- requesting to be kept informed of what measures the government intends to take to protect those at risk because of their involvement in the exhumation of clandestine cemeteries;
- urging the Guatemalan government to ensure the implementation of Principle 15 of the *United Nations Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-Legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions* stating that, "Complainants, witnesses, those conducting the investigations and their families shall be protected from violence, threats of violence or any other form of intimidation".

**APPEALS TO:**

1) President of the Republic

S.E. Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen  
 Presidente de la República de Guatemala  
 Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Faxes: +502 287 4537**  
**Telegrams: Presidente, Guatemala, GUATEMALA**  
**Salutation: Sr. Presidente/Dear President**

2) Minister of Interior

Excmo. Sr. Rodolfo Mendoza  
 Ministro de Gobernación, Ministerio de Gobernación  
 Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Faxes: + 502 251 5368**  
**Telegrams: Ministro de Gobernación, Guatemala, GUATEMALA**  
**Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister**

3) Minister of Defence

Gral. Julio Arnoldo Balconi Turcios  
 Ministro de Defensa, Ministerio de Defensa  
 Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa, Guatemala, Guatemala**  
**Faxes: +502 2 609909 (if voice, ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")**  
**Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:**

Attorney General

Hector Hugo Pérez Aguilar  
 Fiscal General de la Nación, Ministerio Público  
 18 Calle 10-36 Zona 1, Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
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Human Rights Procurator

Lic. Jorge García Laguardia  
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12 Avenida 12-72, Zona 1, Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
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3a. Calle 3-18, Apto.B, Edificio Packard, Zona 1  
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Commander of El Petén  
Col. Guillermo Leopoldo Pimentel Recinos  
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Santa Elena de la Cruz, Flores, Petén, GUATEMALA  
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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 30 August 1996.