

PUBLIC

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15 May 1998

Further information on UA 139/98 (AMR 34/16/98) 1 May 98) - Extrajudicial execution

**GUATEMALA**Mons. Juan José Gerardi Conedera  
and others

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A series of grave recent events in Guatemala, including the murder of Mons Juan Gerardi, a Guatemalan Auxiliary Bishop on 26 April 1998, and death threats subsequently directed at Archbishop Próspero Peñados and others, have led to concerns that human rights defenders, particularly those involved in the Historical Clarification Process may be in imminent danger.

Human rights groups in Guatemala have also expressed concern that investigations into Bishop Gerardi's death have been gravely flawed. They say the Attorney General's Office has been negligent in its investigations and believe that the National Civilian Police (PNC) have arrested the supposed killer of Bishop Gerardi, without looking into reports that his movements were being monitored prior to his death and that his murder may have been ordered by others.

Representatives of ODHA, the Archbishop's Human Rights Office, which Bishop Gerardi coordinated, have also expressed concerns for others involved in the inter-diocesan Recovery of the Historical Memory Project, (REMHI) spearheaded by Bishop Gerardi. Bishop Gerardi was murdered two days after he had presided over presentation of the REMHI report on human rights violations committed during Guatemala's "dirty war." Archbishop Peñados received a telephoned death threat after Bishop Gerardi's funeral. In recent days, two members of ODHA's exhumation team and an Italian priest, Pietro Notta, a strong supporter of REMHI, have reported death threats.

A group calling itself *Jaguar Justiciero* (The Avenging Jaguar), has reportedly issued a communiqué in Guatemala, claiming responsibility for Bishop Gerardi's murder in a letter apparently intended as a threat to Carlos Catu Otzoy, candidate for the mayoralty of Comalapa, Chimaltenango, for the *Frente Democrático Nueva Guatemala* (FDNG), New Guatemala Democratic Front political party. The JJ message claimed that they represented the forces that hold the "real political power in Guatemala"; that the Guatemalan peace process was "only directed at securing international economic aid"; and that "the same thing will happen in Guatemala that happened in El Salvador" where a number of political leaders were killed after the formal signing of the peace agreement there. "We receive orders," it said, and "orders are not debated but have to be carried out."

Some sources suggest that whoever was behind the "JJ" communiqué may also have been responsible for the killing of the acting mayor of San Cruz del Quiché, Quiché department in early May, although local disputes have raged in the town for some years, and others suggest they could have been the reason for his murder. Amílcar Nuila, a Prensa Libre journalist investigating the 1995 Xamán massacre when 11 indigenous peasants were killed by the Guatemalan army, reported two grenades thrown into his home.

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

- renewing appeals for genuine, transparent appeals into the circumstances of Bishop Gerardi's death and the death threats against Archbishop Próspero Peñados;
- appealing also for inquiries into the intimidation, death threats and killing described above;
- pointing out that the international community is gravely concerned at the impact that these attacks on human rights defenders and others may have on the historical clarification process and on the peace process itself;
- insisting that until all of these events are fully clarified, the international community will remain gravely disturbed that Guatemala is in danger of reverting to the past pattern of human rights violations, which made it the subject of sustained international scrutiny and concern over a period of many years.

**APPEALS TO:**

President of the Republic of Guatemala

S.E. Álvaro Arzú Irigoyen

Presidente de la República de Guatemala

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**Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President**

Minister of Foreign Relations

Sr. Eduardo Stein

Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores

Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores

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6ª Calle y 7ª Avenida, Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala , GUATEMALA

**Telegrams: Ministro Relaciones Exteriores, Guatemala, Guatemala**

**Faxes: + 502 251 8445**

**Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister**

Private Secretary to the President

Sr. Gustavo Porras

Secretario Privado del Presidente de la República

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Ciudad de Guatemala , GUATEMALA

**Telegrams: Gustavo Porras, Guatemala, Guatemala**

**Salutation: Señor Secretario / Dear Secretary**

**COPIES TO:**

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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 26 June 1998.