

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 45/03 (AMR 34/008/2003, 18 February 2003) Fear for safety

**GUATEMALA** Staff of the Human Rights Procurator's (PDH) Auxiliary Office, in the town of Nebaj,  
Department of El Quiché  
Members of the Centre for Human Rights Legal Action (CALDH);  
Members of the Movement of Displaced Peoples of the North of Quiché

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Human rights workers in the region of El Quiché, in the northwest of Guatemala, have thanked members of the Urgent Action network for successfully helping to protect them from threats and violence.

In January 2003, the governor of El Quiché made a speech in which he blamed local human rights defenders for preventing compensation payments to former members of Civil Defence Patrols (*Patrullas de Auto-Defensa Civil* (PAC)), civilian adjuncts of the military who were responsible for mass human rights violations during Guatemala's long-running internal conflict. This led to fears that former PAC members would target human rights workers for reprisals, even killings.

Thousands of members of the Urgent Action network took action, urging the government of Guatemala to ensure that human rights workers in El Quiché received sufficient protection, and that local officials respected human rights.

Following the Urgent Action, the governor of El Quiché was removed from office, and there have been no significant attacks on human rights workers in the region. Relationships between human rights workers and former PAC members remains tense, however.

Meanwhile, the payment of compensation to former PAC members remains a controversial issue within Guatemala, with the legality of such payments currently being considered by the country's Constitutional Court.

**Amnesty International is continuing to closely monitor the situation, and will alert members of the UA network if further action is required. Many thanks to all those who sent appeals.**