

PUBLIC

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06 November 2008

UA 309/08 Fear for Safety

GUATEMALA **Miguel Arturo Albizures Pedrosa (m), Vice-President and cameraman of the human rights media organization COMUNICARTE (*Asociación COMUNICARTE*)**
His family and other members of COMUNICARTE
Members of No'j student organization (*Comunidad Estudiantil No'j*)

Human rights activist Miguel Arturo Albizures Pedrosa and a member of the Guatemala City student organization *No'j* (*Comunidad Estudiantil No'j*) were involved in a demonstration which disrupted a government rally on 20 October. Both were attacked a few days later. They, their families and their colleagues are in grave danger.

On 20 October, Miguel Arturo Albizures filmed a demonstration against the president and other government officials. Relatives of people subjected to enforced disappearance during the internal armed conflict and other activists, including members of the student organization *No'j*, disrupted a government rally, which had to be moved to another venue. Two members of *No'j* were followed by a purple pickup truck with tinted windows.

On 25 October, at around 11.40am another *No'j* member, was abducted at 11.40am when she left her home by men in a pickup truck identical or similar to the one that had followed her colleagues five days earlier. It had licence plates that showed it was a government vehicle. She was pulled into the back seat by three men in balaclavas holding knives, who asked her repeatedly, "What are you up to?" (*En qué andas metida?*). They kept her face pressed against the window, and pushed her out, without stopping, about 300m up the road.

Miguel Arturo Albizures is the Vice-President of the human rights media organization COMUNICARTE (*Asociación COMUNICARTE*), which made a video of the 20 October demonstration. Gunmen in a Honda Civic car pulled up outside his house in Guatemala City at about 8pm on 30 October. They walked into the courtyard and opened fire on the house. Over 50 bullets of various calibres were later recovered from the house. The only person in the house was Miguel Arturo Albizures's 16-year-old son, who took cover and was not injured.

COMUNICARTE produces videos on the internal armed conflict of 1960-1996 and other human rights issues in Guatemala, including demonstrations by Guatemalan organizations. A number of their recordings of exhumation of mass graves, in which people were buried after massacres during the internal armed conflict, have been presented as evidence in court and shown on television.

In February 2007, the offices of COMUNICARTE and a number of neighbouring Guatemalan human rights organisations were burgled. The master tapes of COMUNICARTE's entire documentary collection, cameras, projectors and money were taken from the office and nooses were left hanging on the door handles of the building (see Further Information on UA 137/06, 6 February 2007, AMR 34/004/2007). The investigation has made no visible progress, and nobody has been brought to justice.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

More than 200,000 people were killed or disappeared during Guatemala's internal armed conflict, most of them of indigenous origin. The vast majority of the perpetrators remain at large.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of members of the student organization *No'j*, Miguel Arturo Albizures Pedrosa, his family and colleagues in COMUNICARTE;
- calling on the authorities to order an immediate and thorough investigation into the 30 October shooting at Miguel Arturo Albizures's house and the 25 October abduction of a member of *No'j*, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- urging the authorities to ensure that immediate, effective and appropriate measures are taken to guarantee the safety of members of *No'j* and of Miguel Arturo Albizures, his family and colleagues, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- 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 UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

APPEALS TO:

Attorney General and Head of the Public Prosecutor's Office

Lic. José Amílcar Velásquez Zárate

Fiscal General de la República y Jefe del Ministerio Público

8ª Avenida 10-67, Zona 1, Antiguo Edificio del Banco de los Trabajadores,
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: +502 2411 9124

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Estimado Sr. Fiscal General

Minister of the Interior

Francisco José Jiménez Iruugaray

Ministro de Gobernación

6ª Avenida 13-71, Zona 1,
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: +502 2413 8658

Salutation: Dear Minister/Estimado Sr. Ministro

COPIES TO:

Local human rights organization

COMUNICARTE

4 calle 4-63, Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

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 18 December 2008.