

UA 112/02

Death thro

GUATEMALA Macario Mejía González (m)] trade unionists
Miguel Ángel Gómez (m)]

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of the two members of local trade unions in Chichicastenango, El Quiché named above. They have recently been threatened and intimidated by local officials.

On 4 April, Macario Mejía González, Secretary General of the *Sindicato de Trabajadores del Comercio de Chichicastenango*, Small Traders Association in Chichicastenango was reportedly physically attacked and threatened by a member of the municipal corporation. The official, who belongs to the ruling political party, *Frente Republicano Guatemalteco* (FRG), Guatemalan Republican Front, reportedly struck Macario Mejía González and threatened to kill him if he saw him again.

Miguel Ángel Gómez, the official recorder of Chichicastenango's municipal union was illegally dismissed in January, after denouncing corruption by the local mayor and his associates. Since denouncing the officials, he has been the victim of a series of threats and an alleged attempt on his life. The local mayor has reportedly warned him on various occasions to stop making the denunciations.

Following his dismissal, Miguel Ángel Gómez filed a complaint with the Guatemalan Prosecutors Office and the United Nations Verifications Mission to Guatemala (MINUGUA). The Labour Tribunal in Quetzaltenango ordered his reappointment.

The mayor and his council then reportedly issued threatening messages against Miguel Ángel Gómez and a number of the mayor's associates visited various hamlets loyal to the FRG to request that the inhabitants organise a demonstration against Miguel Ángel Gómez. On 10 January, over 300 people reportedly demonstrated against him and according to the *Central General de Trabajadores de Guatemala* (CGTG), Guatemala's main Workers Trade Union Confederation, who videoed the demonstration, it was evident that they were seeking to 'lincharlo', (kill him). When they were unable to find him, they reportedly threatened the local *Juez de Paz*, Peace Judge, whom they believed was hiding him.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

For almost two years, Guatemalan trade unionists have been subjected to a wave of abuses. Many have been threatened, harassed and intimidated for their efforts to improve the rights of their workers or for denouncing corruption (see UA 93/02, AMR 34/022/2002, 28 March 2002; UA 27/02, AMR 34/005/2002, 29 January 2002).

The *Central Latinoamericana de Trabajadores* (CLAT), The Latin American Workers' Confederation, based in Venezuela, recently made a specific call to the Guatemalan government to punish those responsible for threatening trade unionists as well as human rights activists and church figures.

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

- urging the authorities to investigate the recent death threats against Macario Mejía González and Miguel Ángel Gómez and bring those responsible to justice;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee the safety of Macario Mejía González and Miguel Ángel Gómez;
- reminding the authorities that under article 211 of the Labour code, as reformed by decree 13, 2001 they are, *"Tomará las medidas apropiadas para proteger el libre ejercicio del derecho de la sindicalización, de conformidad con la Constitución Política de La República, los tratados y convenios internacionales de trabajo ratificados por Guatemala, el presente Código, sus reglamentos y demás leyes de trabajo y previsión social;"*, to take appropriate measures to protect the freedom to unionise, in line with the Constitution of the Republic, international labour treaties and agreements signed by Guatemala, the present code, its regulations and remaining labour laws and social security.

APPEALS TO:President of the Republic of Guatemala

Lic. Alfonso Portillo Cabrera
 Presidente de la República de Guatemala
 6a. Avenida "A" 4-41, Zona 1,
 Ciudad de Guatemala , GUATEMALA

Telegrams:Presidente de la República de Guatemala, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax: + 502 239 0090

Email:mensajes@presidenteportillo.gob.gt

Salutation:Señor Presidente/Dear President

Minister of the Interior

Sr. Eduardo Arévalo Lacs
 Ministro de Gobernación
 Ministerio de Gobernación
 6ª Avenida 4-64, Zona 4
 Ciudad de Guatemala , GUATEMALA

Telegrams:Ministro de Gobernación, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax:+ 502 362 0239 (you may a voice message, this will be followed by the fax tone)

Salutation:Señor Ministro/Dear Minister

Minister of Labour

Lic. Víctor Hugo Godoy
 Ministro de Trabajo y Previsión Social
 Ministerio de Trabajo
 y Previsión Social
 Edificio Nasa
 14ª Calle 5-49, Zona 1
 Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegrams:Ministro de Trabajo, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax: + 502 230 1363

Salutation:Señor Ministro/Dear Minister

COPIES TO:Human Rights Procurator

Lic. Julio Eduardo Arango Escobar
 Procurador de Derechos Humanos

Procuraduría de los Derechos Humanos
12 Avenida 12-72, Zona 1
Ciudad de Guatemala 01001, GUATEMALA
Telegram: Procurador de Derechos Humanos, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala
Fax: + 502 238 1734
E-mail: opdhg@guatenet.net.gt
Salutation: Señor Procurador/Dear Procurator

News agency

CERIGUA
2a calle 1-42, Zona 1
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala
Fax: + 502 221 2521 (if a voice answers, say "por favor, tono de fax")
E-mail: cerigua@guate.net

Trade Union Confederation

Central General de Trabajadores de Guatemala (CGTG)
3 Av. 12-22, Zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala,
GUATEMALA
Fax: + 502 251 3212
E-mail: cgtg@guate.net

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 24 May 2002.