

GUATEMALA Journalists of the information agency CERIGUA

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of journalists working for the *Centro de Reportes Informativos sobre Guatemala*, (CERIGUA), Centre of Informative Reports on Guatemala, after a member of staff received a telephone death threat.

On 23 July an anonymous male caller telephoned the offices of CERIGUA in Guatemala City and said to a female employee "you are going to die, you bitch" (*te vas a morir hija de la gran puta*).

In recent months, CERIGUA has received a spate of intimidating telephone calls. When staff pick up the phone, the caller waits for a moment and then hangs up. CERIGUA also believes its phones are tapped, as a noise sounding as if there is a third party on the line can often be heard at the beginning or end of a telephone conversation.

The death threat and harassment comes exactly one year and one month after similar harassment and a death threat directed at the CERIGUA's director, Ileana Alamilla (see UA 212/00, 13 July 2000, AMR 34/30/00).

Amnesty International fears that these and other recent threats and attacks against Guatemalan journalists form part of a campaign of intimidation aimed at silencing those who report on human rights abuses and issues critical of the authorities in Guatemala. In March a journalist was grabbed by the neck and threatened with death for her work to expose corruption and another threatened by gunmen (see UA 78/01, AMR 34/009/2001, 30 March 2001 and follow up AMR 34/010/2001). Last year another journalist was shot at and earlier this year, with a colleague, received a number of telephone death threats (see UA 23/01, AMR 34/003/2001, 30 January 2001).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

CERIGUA was founded on 8 August 1983, the date of the coup led by General Oscar Mejía Víctores against General Efraín Ríos Montt. Since then, CERIGUA has reported extensively on the human rights situation in Guatemala, and has received constant threats. In 1994 their offices were raided and robbed, and their archives destroyed.

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

- urging the authorities to take immediate and effective measures to guarantee the safety of those working for CERIGUA;
- calling for an immediate and thorough investigation of the death threat and harassment of CERIGUA, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- expressing concern for the safety of all those involved in efforts to protect human rights and freedom of expression, particularly those who have suffered recent threats or intimidation.

APPEALS TO:

Attorney General

Lic. Adolfo González Rodas
Fiscal General de la República
Ministerio Público
8a. Avenida 10-67, Tercer nivel Zona 1
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Telegrams:Attorney General, Guatemala City, Guatemala
Fax: + 502 221 27 18 (direct)
Salutation: Dear Attorney General/ Estimado Señor Fiscal General

Minister of the Interior
Sr. Byron Barrientos
Ministro de Gobernación
Ministerio de Gobernación
6a Avenida 4-64, Zona 4
Ciudad de Guatemala , GUATEMALA
Telegrams:Interior Minister, Guatemala City, Guatemala
Fax: + 502 362 0239
Salutation:Dear Minister/ Señor Ministro

Minister of Defence
Gral. Eduardo Arevalo Lacs
Ministro de Defensa Nacional
Ministerio de Defensa
Antigua Escuela Politécnica
Avenida Reforma 1-45, Zona 10
Ciudad de Guatemala , GUATEMALA
Telegrams:Defence Minister, Guatemala City, Guatemala
Fax: + 502 360 9009/360 9919
Salutation:Dear Minister/ Señor Ministro

COPIES TO:

Newspaper
CERIGUA, 2a calle 1-42, Zona 1
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala
Tel/Faxes: + 502 238 1456/ 221 2521; E-mails: cerigua@guate.net

Newspaper
Diario El Periódico, 15 Ave 24-51, Zona 13
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala
Faxes: + 502 332 9761; E-mails: opinion@elperiodico.com.gt

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 12 September 2001.