

GUATEMALA César Ovidio SÁNCHEZ AGUILAR and his family

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César Ovidio Sánchez Aguilar, a member of the non-governmental Myrna Mack Foundation (*Fundación Myrna Mack*), has been forced to go into hiding after receiving death threats from members of the local civil defence patrol (*Patrulla de Autodefensa Civil*, PAC - civilian adjuncts to the Guatemalan army). Members of his family have also been facing intimidation.

According to reports, César Sánchez, who works as a *promotor jurídico* (legal promotor) providing information on basic legal matters, organized a workshop on 6 and 7 November 1995 with the local indigenous communities of Tojchiquel and Muxnan in the municipal district of Santa Bárbara, Huehuetenango province, to look at the Accord on Identity and Rights Indigenous Peoples (*Acuerdo sobre identidad y derechos de los pueblos indígenas*), agreed between the government and the armed opposition in March 1995. The workshop was organized in conjunction with the United Nations mission (MINUGUA) and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including the indigenous organization *Coordinadora de Desarrollo y Formación Integral Mam* (CODEFIM), Mam Coordinating Committee for Development and Comprehensive Training. César Sánchez sent a copy of the materials to be used in the workshop - information distributed by MINUGUA, a copy of the accord itself and copies of other accords signed between the government and the armed opposition - to the local mayor (*alcalde*).

César Sánchez was summoned to the mayor's office on 7 November by members of the municipal office. He was met by two members of the mayor's office and two members of the local civil patrol. They criticised him for working for the Myrna Mack Foundation and accused of him being involved with the armed opposition. On leaving the building, he was hit by an unknown individual and threatened with death because of his work with the NGO. That same day, César Sánchez presented a complaint to the National Police in Huehuetenango (*Policía Nacional*).

On 14 November a meeting was arranged with the local mayor. It was attended by a number of people including representatives from local NGOs, MINUGUA, César Sánchez and his family, government representatives, military commissioners (*comisionados militares*, civilian agents of the army, serving under army command), members of the civil patrol and other people from the locality. Before the meeting could begin, the civil patrol members reportedly hurled insults and death threats against César Sánchez and his family. The meeting was suspended out of fears for their safety.

César Sánchez has had to go into hiding. Members of the civil patrol have reportedly been patrolling near César Sánchez's parent's house in an apparent attempt to intimidate the family. A police officer has questioned César's seven-year-old sister about her brother's whereabouts.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The human rights situation in Guatemala continues to be very serious with persistent reports of extrajudicial executions, "disappearances", death threats, harassment and intimidation. Members of NGOs and popular grassroots organizations have been long-term targets of human rights violations. Members of the civil patrols and military commissioners, operating under the control

and with the acquiescence of the armed forces, who have been involved in numerous human rights violations continue to operate with impunity despite the September 1995 announcement by the government that the military commissioners were to be demobilised.

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

- expressing concern at the threats against César Sánchez and the harassment and intimidation of other members of his family;
- calling for an immediate investigation into these incidents and that those responsible be brought to justice;
- asking for guarantees for the safety of César Sánchez and his family.

**APPEALS TO:**

1) President of the Republic:

S.E. Ramiro de León Carpio  
Presidente de la República de Guatemala  
Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Telegrams: Presidente de León Carpio, Guatemala, Guatemala**  
**Faxes: + 502 2 537472**  
**Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President**

2) Minister of Interior:

Lic. Carlos Enrique Reynoso  
Ministro de Gobernación,  
Ministerio de Gobernación  
Despacho Ministerial, Of. No. 8  
Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Telegrams: Ministro de Gobernación, Guatemala, Guatemala**  
**Faxes: + 502 2 537472**  
**Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister**

3) Minister of Defence

Gral. Marco Antonio González Taracena  
Ministro de Defensa  
Ministerio de Defensa  
Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa, Guatemala, Guatemala**  
**Faxes: + 502 2 537472**  
**Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:**

Fiscal General

Lic. Ramses Cuestas Gómez  
Fiscal General de la Nación  
Ministerio Público  
18 Calle 10-36, Zona 1  
Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Human Rights Procurator

Lic. Jorge García Laguardia  
Procurador de los Derechos Humanos  
12 Avenida 12-72  
Zona 1, Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Human Rights Organization

Sres.

Oficina de Derechos Humanos del  
Arzobispado de Guatemala (ODHAG)  
Apartado Postal 723  
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 10 January 1996.