

UA 134/02

Fear for

GUATEMALA Domingo Yaxón Guarcax (m), aged 21, member of the *Movimiento de Jóvenes Mayas (MOJOMAYAS)*, Young Mayan Movement, affiliated to the *Coordinadora Nacional de Viudas de Guatemala (CONAVIGUA)*, National Coordination of Guatemalan Widows

Other members of CONAVIGUA and its member organisations

Domingo Yaxón Guarcax was abducted, interrogated and beaten unconscious in the centre of Guatemala City on 3 May. He works as a courier for a prominent Guatemalan human rights organisation, and Amnesty International believes the attack was an attempt to intimidate him and others involved in investigating human rights violations by the army during the country's civil conflict.

Four men forced him into a black car at about 1.30pm. They apparently stripped him naked, blindfolded him, questioned him about his work, beat him and cut him with a pocket knife. Domingo Yaxón Guarcax works for the *Movimiento de Jóvenes Mayas (MOJOMAYAS)*, Young Mayan Movement, which is affiliated to the *Coordinadora Nacional de Viudas de Guatemala (CONAVIGUA)*, National Coordination of Guatemalan Widows. The men threatened to kill him if he continued with his work for CONAVIGUA. One man reportedly said to the others, "*matémoslo muchá*" ("let's kill him, guys"). They beat him unconscious and left him near a funeral parlour.

Domingo Yaxón Guarcax had seen the black car following him for several weeks before the attack. He had been on his way to a bank to deposit cheques when he was abducted, and was carrying cash as well, but his attackers stole nothing. Guatemalan human rights organisations say this was a clear attempt to intimidate Guatemalan human rights defenders into stopping their work.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

CONAVIGUA was set up in 1988 by a group of women whose husbands had "disappeared" or been killed during the country's civil conflict, which began in the 1960s and was only formally ended by the Peace Accords of 1996. The organisation's leadership and members have repeatedly suffered threats and harassment for their work since its foundation.

An estimated 200,000 people, mostly indigenous, were massacred during the conflict, and most were buried in mass graves. In recent years CONAVIGUA has carried out numerous exhumations of these clandestine cemeteries, with the technical support of the *Fundación de Antropología Forense Guatemalteco (FAFG)*, Forensic Anthropology Foundation of Guatemala. In 2000 CONAVIGUA also joined the Rigoberta Menchú Foundation lawsuit filed in Spain which charged past and present Guatemalan officials with genocide and other crimes against humanity.

Domingo Yaxón Guarcax was kidnapped four days after the assassination of Guillermo Ovalle of the Rigoberta Menchu Foundation (see UA 133/02, AMR 34/031/2002, 1 May 2002) and in the wake of a recent escalation of threats, harassment and intimidation against those investigating past human rights violations and seeking to bring those responsible to justice. Forensic anthropologists carrying out exhumations of clandestine cemeteries have been especially targeted during recent months (see UA 68/02, AMR 34/014/2002, 5 March 2002 and AMR/025/2002, 13 March 2002).

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

- urging the authorities to investigate the abduction and beating of Domingo Yaxón Guarcax in Guatemala City on 3 May, and bring those responsible to justice;
- calling on the authorities to protect him and other members of CONAVIGUA and its member organisations;
- reminding the authorities of their obligations to human rights defenders, as laid out in the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted in December 1998, and in resolutions of the Organization of American States;
- reminding the authorities that continued international support for the country's peace process depends on progress in human rights, and that attacks on human rights defenders, such as CONAVIGUA, cannot be tolerated.

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

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

Fax: + 502 239 0090 (please keep trying this number)

Salutation: Dear President/Señor Presidente

Vice-president of the Republic of Guatemala

Lic. Juan Francisco Reyes López

6ª Avenida 'A' 4-18

Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegram: Vicepresidente de la República, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax: + 502 239 0090 (please keep trying this number)

Salutation: Dear vice-president/Señor Vicepresidente

Minister of the Interior

Eduardo Arévalo Lacs

Ministro de Gobernación

Ministerio de Gobernación

6ª Avenida 4-64, Zona 4

Ciudad de Guatemala , GUATEMALA

Telegram: Ministro de Gobernación, Ciudad de Guatemala , Guatemala

Fax: + 502 362 0239/ 362 0237

Salutation: Dear Minister/Señor Ministro

Director General of the National Civil Police

Comisario Luis Arturo Paniagua Galicia

6ª Avenida 13-71, Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegram: Comisario Luis Arturo Paniagua Galicia, Ciudad de Guatemala , Guatemala

Fax: + 502 251 9382

Salutation: Dear Director/Señor Director

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Organisation

CONAVIGUA
8a. Avenida 2-29, Zona 1
Guatemala City
Guatemala
Fax:

Newspaper
Diario Prensa Libre
13 Calle 9-31, Zona 1
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Fax: + 502 251 8768

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 June 2002.