

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 34/38/97

19 November 1997

Further information on EXTRA 101/97 (AMR 34/28/97, 15 July 1997) and follow-up (AMR 34/34/97, 4 September 1997) - Death Penalty

GUATEMALA Manuel Martínez Coronado

Amnesty International is concerned that the execution of Manuel Martínez Coronado is imminent, even though the defence lawyer has recourse to one further legal measure to delay the execution.

According to information received by Amnesty International, the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights wrote to the Guatemalan authorities on 18 November 1997 requesting (precautionary measures) that the execution be delayed until the Commission has reviewed the case of Manuel Martínez Coronado, who is scheduled to be executed at 6am on 21 November.

Amnesty International is concerned that the Guatemalan authorities may refuse to cooperate with the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights, as on previous occasions, thereby denying the accused his right to seek international protection and obstructing the Commission's efforts to carry out its functions.

The organization is also concerned that the execution of Manuel Martínez Coronado may go ahead despite evidence that standards of due process were not strictly followed in this case.

Manuel Martínez Coronado would be the first Guatemalan to be executed by lethal injection after the Guatemalan Congress approved decree 100 to 96 in October 1996, authorizing executions to be carried out in this way.

Analysis of cases of executions by lethal injection in the United States of America indicates that if the process is not administered correctly, people may experience discomfort or pain. This information undermines frequent claims that lethal injection is the most "humanitarian" way to execute convicted criminals. In addition to this concern, the execution will be carried out by paramedical personnel. AI opposes the death penalty unconditionally and the involvement of paramedical personnel in killings on behalf of the State.

Manuel Martínez Coronado was sentenced to death in October 1995 for the multiple homicide of seven members of a family which he allegedly committed in May 1995.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The first execution in 13 years in Guatemala was carried out on 13 September 1996, when Pedro Castillo Mendoza and Roberto Girón were killed by firing squad. (See EXTRA 100/96, AMR 34/18/96, 2 July 1996 and update AMR 34/29/96, 24 September). On this occasion, the Guatemalan authorities rejected a petition by the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights to grant precautionary measures on the grounds that such measures are not contemplated by Guatemalan law and that the accused had been found guilty by the Guatemalan judiciary.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/emails/faxes/express/airmail letters in Spanish or in your own language:

- recognizing the seriousness of the crime for which Manuel Martínez Coronado was convicted, but stating opposition to the death penalty in all cases, as

the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment and a violation of the right to life as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human rights;

- urging that the death sentence imposed on Manuel Martínez Coronado be commuted and no further executions carried out in Guatemala;
- expressing concern that proceedings in this case appear to contain irregularities which violate standards of due process;
- stressing that the death penalty, however inflicted, always amounts to cruel, degrading and inhuman punishment, and is brutalizing to all involved in its infliction;
- noting that refusal to grant precautionary measures in this case would constitute a violation of Manuel Martínez Coronado's right to seek international protection and an obstruction of the efforts of the Inter-American Commission's to carry out its mandate.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

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Salutation: Sr Presidente / Dear President

President of Congress

Sra. Arabela Castro Quiñones
 Presidenta del Congreso Nacional de la República
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Procurator General

Lic. Acisclo Valladares Molina
 Procurador General de la Nación General
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COPIES TO:

Minister of Foreign Relations

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and to diplomatic representatives of Guatemala accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.