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Fear for Safety

3 November 1994

GUATEMALA

Félix GONZÁLEZ, trade union leader  
Débora GUZMÁN (f), his wife  
Julio COJ, trade union leader  
José GIL, trade unionist

and 49 workers of Lunafil S.A.

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Workers and trade union leaders at the Lunafil S.A. textile factory in Amatitlán, Department of Guatemala, are reported to have been subjected to repeated death threats and other acts of intimidation since May 1994, when a group of 49 of them began a protest outside the factory against what they claim to be its illegal and unjustified closure with the subsequent loss of 200 jobs. A spate of recent threats has greatly heightened concern for the safety of those named above.

Incidents reported to Amnesty International include:

- May - unknown men carrying weapons went to José Gil's home several times to threaten him;
- 6 October - a group of masked men violently intercepted Débora Guzmán and threatened to kill her within 48 hours if her husband, Félix González, and Julio Coj did not stop their union activities;
- 7 October - the offices of the *Unión Sindical de Trabajadores de Guatemala (UNSI TRAGUA)*, Guatemalan Workers Labour Union, to which Lunafil's trade union is affiliated, received several anonymous phone calls. In the last of these, the callers stated that they were holding Débora Guzmán and that her life was in her husband's hands;
- 8 October - Débora Guzmán and Félix González received an anonymous letter at home reiterating the threats.

Other members of the family of Débora Guzmán and Félix González are also reported to have been subjected to acts of intimidation; in one incident Félix González's brother was shot at by unknown individuals.

The workers suggest that members of private security guards, hired by the Lunafil management during another dispute in 1987 and 1988, may have been responsible for some of these incidents. No official investigation has been opened.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Trade unionists have been a long-term target of human rights violations in Guatemala and recent months have seen a renewed wave of abuses against them.

In a previous dispute at Lunafil, from June 1987 to May 1988, Lunafil's workers carried out an occupation after labour negotiations broke down due to disagreements over working hours and conditions that management were trying to impose, and which the workers said were in breach of Guatemala's Labour Code. On 27 May 1988, Julio Coj was shot at, reportedly from a police car, when riot police was trying to end the occupation.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in Spanish or in your own language:

- expressing concern at the serious threats and acts of intimidation against

Félix González, Julio Coj, José Gil and Débora Guzmán;

- urging the government to take immediate measures to guarantee their safety and that of their families;
- asking the government to take measures to guarantee the safety of all Lunafil workers, especially those demonstrating outside Lunafil S.A.;
- asking that these incidents be fully investigated and that those found to be responsible be brought to justice;
- stressing that, as private security firms must, by law, be licensed by the National Police and the Ministry of Interior, Amnesty International considers the Guatemalan authorities responsible for investigating these incidents and bringing the perpetrators to justice.

#### **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 2 347 364**  
**Telexes: 5331 CAPRES GU**  
**Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente /Dear President**

##### 2) Minister of Interior:

Lic. Danilo Parrinello Blanco  
 Ministro de Gobernación  
 Ministerio de Gobernación  
 Despacho Ministerial, Of. No. 8  
 Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Telegrams: Ministro de Gobernación, Guatemala, Guatemala**  
**Faxes: + 502 2 515 368 / 518 105**  
**Telexes: 5085 MINGOB**  
**Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister**

##### 3) Director General of National Police

Lic. Salvador Figueroa  
 Director General de la Policía Nacional  
 6 Avenida 13-71, Zona 1  
 Guatemala, Guatemala  
**Telegrams: Director General de la Policia Nacional, Guatemala, Guatemala**  
**Telephone: + 502 2 516268, 519429**  
**Faxes: + 502 2 519382**  
**Salutation: Sr. Director General / Dear Director General**

#### **COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

##### Human Rights Procurator:

Lic. Jorge García Laguardia  
 Procurador de los Derechos Humanos  
 12 Avenida 12-72, Zona 1,  
 Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Faxes: + 502 2 81734**

##### Minister of Labour

Sra. Gladys Morfin  
 Ministro de Trabajo y Previsión Social

Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social  
Palacio Nacional  
Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
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Trade Union  
Unión Sindical de Trabajadores de Guatemala  
(UNSI TRAGUA)  
11 Calle 8-14, Of. 34,  
Tercer Nivel,  
Zona 1, 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 15 December 1994.