

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Note to UA Coordinator: Please bring this to the attention of groups working on indigenous issues.

UA 431/91 Fear of "Disappearance" and Death Threats

10 December 1991

GUATEMALA: Diego Domingo MARTÍN and family (accent on the I of Martin)

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of Diego Domingo Martín, an indigenous leader, who was reportedly abducted on 8 November 1991 in the municipality of La Democracia, Huehuetenango. Amnesty International is also concerned that the family of Diego Domingo Martín were threatened, after denouncing his abduction.

At 9.00pm on 8 November 1991, five armed masked men in plain clothes, went to the home of Diego Martín's father-in-law in the municipality of La Democracia, Huehuetenango department. Diego Martín was taken from the house with his hands tied and only partially dressed. His relatives recognized the commander of the Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil (PAC), Civil Defence Patrols [civilian agents of the armed forces], in La Democracia as one of the abductors. Relatives also stated that Diego Martín had been accused by the PAC of "being a member of the guerrillas".

The family subsequently denounced the abduction to the National Police and to the Procurador Auxiliar de Derechos Humanos (Auxiliary Procurator for Human Rights) of Huehuetenango. Relatives of Diego Martín reported that when they went to the Auxiliary Procurator's office in Huehuetenango, the Secretary at the office asked why they were making a denunciation when their relative was a "guerrilla". Relatives also stated that the Secretary also intimated that if they denounced the facts of the abduction, they too may suffer the same fate as Diego Martín. Relatives also reported recently receiving threats from the PAC. Amnesty International is concerned that Diego Martín may have "disappeared" and also for the safety of his relatives.

BACKGROUND

Indigenous leaders and villagers have been the target of human rights violations over the past two decades in Guatemala. Thousands have been seized, mutilated and shot dead. Those accused by the authorities as "guerrillas" and detained by military and police, or those acting under their orders have been "disappeared" -- their families and friends cannot find out what has happened to them.

President Jorge Serrano Elías came to power in January 1991. During his presidential campaign he had pledged to ensure protection of human rights. However, Amnesty International remains seriously concerned at the continuing occurrence of human rights violations, including killings, death threats, torture and "disappearances". As in past years, the choice of victim and the manner in which the abuses have been carried out suggest the involvement of members of the security forces.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/airmail letters:

- expressing concern at the forcible abduction of Diego Domingo Martín by armed men, one of whom was believed to have been an agent of the armed forces;
- urging the authorities to clarify his whereabouts and legal situation;
- asking for assurances that his physical integrity be respected;
- asking for guarantees for the safety of the relatives of Diego Domingo Martín.

APPEALS TO:

1) President

S.E. Jorge Serrano Elías
Presidente de la
República de Guatemala
Palacio Nacional
Guatemala, Guatemala

Telegrams: Presidente Serrano, Guatemala, Guatemala

Telexes: 5331 CAPRES GU

Faxes: + 502 2 537472; + 502 2 519702

[Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President]

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2) Minister of the Interior

Lic. Fernando Hurtado Prem
Ministro de Gobernación
Despacho Ministerial
Oficina No. 8, Primer Nivel
Palacio Nacional
Guatemala, Guatemala

Telegrams: Ministro Gobernación, Guatemala, Guatemala

Telexes: 5085 MINGOB GU

Faxes: + 502 2 518105

[Salutation: Señor Ministro/Dear Minister]

3) Minister of Defence

Gral. José García Samayoa
Ministro de Defensa
Ministerio de Defensa
Palacio Nacional
Guatemala, Guatemala

Telegrams: Ministro Defensa Mendoza, Guatemala, Guatemala

Telexes: 5361 COMGUA GU

Faxes: + 502 2 537472

[Salutation: Señor Ministro/Dear Minister]

4) Commander

Cnel. Sergio Arnolando Camargo Muralles
Comandante
Base Militar No.19
Huehuetenango, Huehuetenango
Guatemala

Telegrams: Comandante Muralles, Huehuetenango, Guatemala

[Salutation: Sr. Comandante/Dear Commander]

COPIES TO:

Señor Acisclo Valladares
Procurador General de la Nación
Procuraduría General de la Nación
18 Calle 10-36
Zona 1, Guatemala
Guatemala

Lic. Ramiro de León Carpio
Procurador de Derechos Humanos
Avenida Simeón Cañas 10-61
Zona 2,
Guatemala, Guatemala

Unión Sindical de Trabajadores de Guatemala (UNSITRAGUA)
11 Calle 8-14, 3er Nivel

Edificio Tecún, Of 34
Zona 1, Guatemala
Guatemala

Diario Siglo XXI
7a Avenida 11-79
Edificio Galerias España, 6o piso
Zona 9, Guatemala, Guatemala

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after the 21 January 1992.