

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 219/93 Possible extrajudicial execution / Possible attempted
extrajudicial execution

6 July 1993

GUATEMALA: Jorge Carpio Nicolle
Juan Vicente Villacorta
Alejandro Avila (also reported as Arriola)
Rigoberto González
Sidney Shaw (aged 16)

Amnesty International is gravely concerned at the killings on 3 July 1993 of the first four persons named above, and the wounding of the fifth, 16 year-old Sidney Shaw, in circumstances which suggest that those who died may have been subjected to extrajudicial executions, and that Sidney Shaw may have been the victim of an attempted extrajudicial execution.

Jorge Carpio Nicolle was the cousin and long-term political ally of Ramiro de León Carpio, Guatemala's former Human Rights Procurator. De León was recently elected by the Guatemalan Congress to fill the unexpired presidential term of President Jorge Serrano. Serrano had been forced to flee the country after carrying out an unsuccessful "auto-golpe" (self-coup) on 25 May.

Jorge Carpio Nicolle was one of Guatemala's most prominent politicians, and also owner and publisher of the major Guatemalan newspaper, El Gráfico. In his fifties, Jorge Carpio Nicolle founded the centrist political party Unión de Centro Nacional (UCN), Union of the National Centre some thirty years ago. In 1985, he narrowly missed election as Guatemala's president; his cousin, de León Carpio was his vice-presidential running mate. Jorge Carpio Nicolle was again narrowly defeated in the 1990 presidential elections. He had also been expected to contest the forthcoming 1996 elections, but de León's selection to fill out Serrano's term would have prevented that, as under the Guatemalan constitution, relatives may not succeed each other as president. Jorge Carpio Nicolle had himself reportedly played a key role in the alliance of business, social and military factions that drove former president Serrano from power in May after he tried to seize near dictatorial powers. He is the most prominent figure to have been killed in Guatemala in recent years.

The attack in which Carpio Nicolle and his companions died took place in the department of El Quiché in an area under the jurisdiction of Military Base 20. Carpio Nicolle was reportedly visiting the area in connection with UCN business when his vehicle was followed by and then stopped by masked men at about 10pm, Saturday, 3 July, 1993. A witness to the attack has said that the assailants' original motive may have been robbery, but that when they recognised Carpio Nicolle, they opened fire on him and his companions. Marta Arrivillaga de Carpio, Jorge Carpio Nicolle's wife, was also in the vehicle, but was unharmed. The other victims were named as Juan Vicente Villacorta, a member of UCN's political council and El Quiché departmental director for the party; Alejandro Avila (also reported as Arriola), UCN campaign coordinator; and Rigoberto González, a member of Carpio Nicolle's security guard. Sidney Shaw, who was shot in the legs, is described as a 16-year-old nephew of Carpio Nicolle.

The area in which the attack occurred has reportedly been the scene of clashes between the army and the armed opposition in recent months, as well as reported attacks by the army on the Comunidades de Pueblos en Resistencia (CPRs), Communities of Peoples in

Resistance, groups of largely indigenous peasants who fled army actions in their areas some years ago, and have thus far resisted returning or being forced to return to areas under military control.

Some sources, including the person described as a witness to the attack, have stated that the assailants were members of the armed opposition. However, the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG), Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity, the opposition coalition, immediately condemned the killings and denied responsibility for the attack.

President de León has reportedly ordered the Guatemalan Interior Minister to initiate an inquiry into the incident.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

For many years, those suspected of opposition to the government of the day have been targets of abuses in Guatemala, including threats, harassment, torture, "disappearances," and extrajudicial executions. However, President de León's past experience as the country human rights procurator and the undertakings he made in his inaugural address to protect human rights, raised hopes in some quarters in Guatemala that his administration might see some improvement in the human rights situation in the country. However, coming so soon after the recent political crisis precipitated by President Serrano's attempted self-coup, these latest killings and the recent abduction and torture of a woman active in the multi-sectoral commission which helped force President Serrano out of office (See UA 218/93, AMR 34/45/93) could pose a threat to political stability in Guatemala and to the hopes that President de León Carpio will be able to act on his promises to return the country to the rule of law.

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

- expressing grave concern at the killings of the four people named above and the wounding of Sidney Shaw;
- expressing support for the investigation announced by President de León Carpio, and asking that its results be made public;
- in the case of messages to President de León Carpio, please also express condolences for the death of his cousin, and the wounding of his cousin's nephew, and ask that condolences also be expressed to the relatives of the other victims of the attack;
- as Jorge Carpio Nicolle was a Vice President of the Liberal International Organization and until 1991 President of the Federation of Liberal Parties in Central America and the Caribbean, you could also approach Liberal party politicians and members in your own country and ask them to send similar appeals.

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 Serrano, Guatemala, Guatemala

Faxes: + 502 2 537472, + 502 2 519702

Telexes: 5331 CAPRES GU

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President

2) Minister of Interior:

Lic. Arnoldo Ortiz Moscoso
Ministro de Gobernación
Ministerio de Gobernación
Despacho Ministerial, Of. No. 8
Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegrams: Ministro de Gobernación, Guatemala, Guatemala

Faxes: + 502 2 518105

Telexes: 5085 MINGOB

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

3) Minister of Defence:

Gral. Mario Enríquez Morales

Ministro de Defensa

Ministerio de Defensa

Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa, Guatemala, Guatemala

Faxes: + 502 2 537472

Telexes: 5361 COMGUA GU

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

4) Commander of Military Base 20

Comandante, Base Militar 20

Santa Cruz,

El Quiché, GUATEMALA

Telegrams: Comandante, Base Militar 20, El Quiché, Guatemala

Salutation: Sr. Comandante / Dear Commander

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS 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 17 August 1993.