

PUBLIC

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Fear for Safety/Death threats 5 Septem

**GUATEMALA** Roly Escobar (m), leader of the *Coordinadora Nacional Sindical y Popular* (CNSP), the National Union and Popular Coordination  
Over 40 people occupying land in Guatemala City

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Amnesty International is deeply concerned for the safety of a missing group of residents who had been occupying land in the suburb of Justo Rufino Barrios, located in zone 21 of the capital, Guatemala City. Roly Escobar, the leader of the *Coordinadora Nacional Sindical y Popular* (CNSP), the National Popular Union Coordinating Body, the organization that is filing the legal suits on behalf of the families involved, and his family have also received anonymous written death threats and death threats made by telephone.

Roly Escobar stated in a press conference that the local police authorities have also threatened local leaders of various grass-roots organizations who had demanded to know the whereabouts of their families and friends.

According to eyewitnesses, at 7.30pm on the night of Sunday 25 August, armed members of the *Policía Nacional Civil* (PNC), National Civil Police, and members of another local dwellers' association raided the settlement in zone 21. Although the police, reportedly from the local police station, Comisaría 14, were not carrying identification and were not in possession of a judicial order, they forced the residents off the land that they were occupying.

While many people fled to nearby houses, the armed police and members of the association of a neighbouring settlement reportedly forced 40 adults (21 women and 19 men) and an undetermined number of children into private buses after burning their belongings. The residents were then driven away on the buses, which, according to reports, belonged to a local businessman. The residents have not been seen since the violent eviction took place. Eyewitnesses have identified a Sub-Commissioner from Comisaría 14, and the registration numbers of two police patrol cars as having taken part in the eviction.

Despite efforts by CNSP and others to locate those detained, their whereabouts are still unknown, and local police deny holding them or having participated in the eviction.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Approximately 80 previously landless families have been occupying the uncultivated piece of land in the suburb of Justo Rufino Barrios, in Zone 21 of Guatemala City, Department of Guatemala, since 17 August. The families occupied caves and built plastic and cardboard shelters on the land, which was formerly owned by the Banco Nacional de la Vivienda (Banvi), the National Housing Bank.

The CNSP has initiated a case concerning the missing residents and the subsequent death threats with the Ministerio Público (MP), Public Prosecutor's Office, and has filed a complaint concerning both the Procuraduría de los Derechos Humanos (PDH), Human Rights Ombudsman, and La Misión de Verificación de las Naciones Unidas en Guatemala (MINUGUA), the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala.

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

- urging the authorities to investigate and immediately clarify the whereabouts of the residents of the land settlement in Colonia Justo Rufino Barrios and, if detained, to release them unless charged with a criminal offence and to allow them access to their relatives and to legal counsel while in detention;

- calling on the authorities to investigate the threats made against Roly Escobar and his family and the relatives of those who are missing and to guarantee the safety of members of the CNSP, and others involved in the case.

**APPEALS TO:**

Minister of the Interior

Lic. Adolfo Reyes Calderón

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 0237

**Salutation:** **Don Minister/Señor Ministro**

12 Avenida 12-72, Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax: +502 238 1734

Newspaper

CERIGUA

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Attorney General

Lic. Carlos David de León Argueta

Fiscal General de la República

Fiscalía General del Ministerio Público

8a. Avenida 10-57

Tercer nivel

Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Telegram:** **Fiscal General de la República, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala**

**Fax:** + 502 221 2718

**Salutation:** **Señor Fiscal / Don Sir**

Director General of the National Civil Police

Comisario Luis Arturo Paniagua Galicia

Director General de la Policía Nacional Civil

6a Avenida 13-71, Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Telegram:** **Director General de la Policía, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala**

**Fax:** + 502 251 9382

**Salutation:** **Don Director / Señor Director**

Commissioner of Police Office 14 of the National Civil Police

El Comisario

Comisaría 14

Calzada de Justo Rufino Barrios

Zona 21

Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Salutation:** **Don Commissioner / Señor Comisario**

**COPIES TO:**

Human Rights Ombudsman

Lic. Sergio Morales

Procurador de los Derechos Humanos

Procuraduría de los Derechos Humanos

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 17 October 2002.