

PUBLIC

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16 September 2002

Further information on UA 266/02 (34/051/2002, 28 August 2002) - Death threats/Fear for safety

GUATEMALA Roberto Romero (m), lawyer

new names: Manuel Gerardo Romero (m)  
Carmen Aída Ibarra (f)  
and other members of the Myrna Mack Foundation

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Amnesty International is gravely concerned for the safety of the staff of the human rights organization La Fundación Myrna Mack (FMM), Myrna Mack Foundation, in the context of the trial which recently opened in Guatemala against three military officials who allegedly ordered the 1990 extrajudicial execution of anthropologist Myrna Mack.

On the morning of 11 September, a week after the trial opened, an unidentified male continuously followed Carmen Aída Ibarra, the FMM's political advisor, through Guatemala City. Despite her attempts to evade him by entering a café, the man continued to shadow and observe her in what she considered to be a threatening manner.

Several hours later, Manuel Gerardo Romero, the son of lawyer Roberto Romero, received a series of electronic messages on his mobile telephone. The messages stated 'tomorrow you are going to die ("*el día de mañana se va a morir*") and 'you'd better be scared because tomorrow you will die' ("*ojalá estés asustado porque te vas a morir*").

Prior to the trial, on 23 August, Roberto Romero, the lawyer for the Myrna Mack Foundation, had received a number of telephoned death threats and his home in Guatemala City was fired upon (see original UA 266/02, AMR 34/051/2002).

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Anthropologist Myrna Mack Chang was stabbed to death in Guatemala City in September 1990 after publishing a ground-breaking study which concluded that government counter-insurgency policies had caused the internal displacement of Guatemala's indigenous peoples and their subsequent suffering (see *Guatemala's Lethal Legacy: Past Impunity and Renewed Human Rights Violations*, AMR 34/001/2002).

Since then, her sister, Helen Mack, has struggled courageously to bring those responsible for Myrna Mack's death to justice. In 1993, Military Sergeant Noel de Jesús Beteta Alvarez was sentenced to 25 years for having carried out the killing. Helen Mack then filed suit against General Edgar Augusto Godoy Gaytán, Colonel Juan Guillermo Oliva Carrera and Colonel Juan Valencia Osorio, who allegedly planned and ordered the murder, but a series of delays, most due to appeals by the defence, meant that proceedings only opened against them in September 2002.

Staff and supporters of the Foundation have faced threats and intimidation since it was founded, but these have escalated in the context of the new proceedings against high-ranking military officials. This has occurred despite recommendations from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights that members of the Myrna Mack Foundation be provided with protection by the Guatemalan state.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Roberto and Manuel Gerardo Romero, in view of recent anonymous death threats, and of Carmen Aída Ibarra, the Myrna Mack Foundation's political advisor who has been the victim of intimidation and harassment;

- urging the authorities to investigate immediately these abuses, making the results public and bringing those responsible to justice;  
 - calling on the authorities to guarantee that all members of the Mack Foundation, their families and those involved in the present legal proceedings receive the protection recommended by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

**APPEALS TO:**Vice President of the Republic of Guatemala

Lic. Juan Francisco Reyes López  
 Vicepresidente de la República de Guatemala  
 6a Avenida "A", 4-18, Zona 1  
 Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

**Telegram:** **Vicepresidente de la República de Guatemala, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala**

**Fax:** **+ 502 221 4537**

**Salutation:** **Dear Vice President/Señor Vicepresidente**

Attorney General

Fiscal General

Lic. Carlos David De León Argueta  
 Oficina de la Fiscalía General del Ministerio Público  
 8a Avenida, 10-67, Tercer Nivel,  
 Zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

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

**Fax:** **+ 502 221 2718**

**Salutation:** **Dear Attorney General/Señor Fiscal General**

Secretary of Strategic Affairs

Lic. Edgar A. Gutiérrez

Secretario de Asuntos Estratégicos  
 Secretaría de Asuntos Estratégicos  
 6a Avenida 'A' 3-53, Zona 1  
 Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

**Telegram:** **Secretario de Asuntos Estratégicos, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala**

**Fax:** **+ 502 232 2886**

**Salutation:** **Dear Secretary/Señor Secretario**

**COPIES TO:**Fundación Myrna Mack

6 Calle 1-36, Edificio Valsari,  
 Oficina 504  
 Zona 10  
 Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

**Fax:** **+ 502 332 5846**

Newspaper

Diario Prensa Libre  
 13 Calle 9-31  
 Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

**Fax:** **+ 502 251 8768/ 230 2193**

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 28 October 2002.