

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of "Disappearance"

5 December 1990

GUATEMALA: Oscar Augusto Miranda, aged 20

Amnesty International is concerned for the physical integrity of Oscar Augusto Miranda, a street trader, who was allegedly detained by members of the security forces on 2 December 1990 in Guatemala City.

At 10.30pm on the evening of 2 December, Oscar Augusto Miranda was returning to his home in Zone 12 of Guatemala City, when he was intercepted on his doorstep by six heavily armed men in plain clothes driving three four-door vans. A relative, who witnessed the abduction, was told not to intervene because "somos de la policia" (we are policemen). The witness believes, however, that the men may have been from G-2, a military intelligence unit, because of the manner in which the detention was carried out. Oscar Miranda was handcuffed and forced into one of the vans before being taken away to an unknown destination. The men also took his pick-up, which he uses for his work as a street trader.

On the same night as Oscar Miranda was taken, relatives went to the 1st and 5th Police Precincts looking for him, but the authorities denied holding him. A writ of habeas corpus was presented to the authorities, but his whereabouts remain unknown. Amnesty International fears that he may be tortured, killed or "disappeared".

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Tens of thousands of people have been victims of human rights violations in Guatemala over the past two decades. Members of all branches of the Guatemalan police and military have been responsible for a wide range of human rights violations against those considered to be government opponents. Trade unionists, academics and students, priests and catechists have been abducted, tortured and killed. Indian villagers have been seized, mutilated and shot dead.

After nearly 20 years of military government, a civilian government was elected in January 1986. However, after a brief decrease in human rights violations, reports of abductions, "disappearances," and political killings escalated throughout the administration of President Vinicio Cerezo. Now, as the administration reaches its closing months (the first round of presidential elections was held on 11 November), abuses have increased.

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

- expressing concern at the detention of Oscar Augusto Miranda apparently by members of the security forces;
- urging the authorities to clarify his whereabouts and legal situation;
- expressing concern that if detained, he may be tortured while in custody and asking for assurances that his physical integrity will be respected.

APPEALS TO:

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and to diplomatic representatives of Guatemala in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 16 January 1991.