

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of "Disappearance"

11 December 1990

GUATEMALA : Ventura ALVAREZ PEREZ, aged 55

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of 55-year-old salesman Ventura Alvarez Pérez, who was abducted on 4 December 1990 in the Mixco area of Guatemala City.

According to relatives, Ventura Alvarez was seized by four armed men in plain clothes outside his home in the Colonia Bosques de San Nicolás, in the Mixco, Guatemala City on 4 December. He was threatened and forced into a grey car, which drove off to an unknown destination. Relatives denounced his abduction to the police, but Ventura Alvarez' whereabouts are unknown.

Ventura Alvarez, originally from Santa Cruz del Quiché, El Quiché department, is a former leader of Acción Católica (Catholic Action), a Roman Catholic grassroots organization active at that time, many of whose members were targeted by the security forces during the counter-insurgency campaigns in the early 1980's in Guatemala. Ventura Alvarez also worked as a bilingual presenter for Radio Quiché. He and his family were forced to flee Santa Cruz del Quiché in 1980, after hundreds of members of Catholic Action were subjected to human rights violations, including torture, "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution, because of their work with Catholic Action, which the armed forces frequently characterized as having links with the "guerrillas".

Given the circumstances of the abduction, Amnesty International is concerned that Ventura Alvarez may have been abducted by the security forces because of his past activities as a leader of Catholic Action, and fears that, if detained, he may be tortured, "disappeared" or extrajudicially executed.

Amnesty International knows of many cases of people who continue to be targeted by the security forces because of their past activities with such organizations.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the early 1980's many thousands of non-combatant civilians, most of them Indian peasants, were extrajudicially executed by the armed forces in the Guatemalan countryside, including in the department of El Quiché in the course of army counter-insurgency operations.

Since the government of President Vinicio Cerezo Arévalo assumed power in January 1986, Amnesty International has continued to receive reports of "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions in Guatemala.

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

- expressing concern that Ventura Alvarez Pérez may have been abducted by 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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Procuraduría General de la Nación
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COPIES TO:

Lic. Ramiro de León Carpio
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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 22 January 1991.