

PUBLIC

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Fear of safety

17 December 2002

GUATEMALA

Alberta Velásquez (f)

Josefina Bámaca Velásquez (f)

Egidia Bámaca Velásquez (f)

Their families and others associated with the Efraín Bámaca case

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] Sisters

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of the three sisters of “disappeared” guerrilla leader, Efraín Bámaca, and their families following recent acts of intimidation and violence against them.

On 11 December, a group of six men wearing ski masks, armed with machetes and high calibre weapons broke into Egidia Bámaca Velásquez’ home outside Malacantán, San Marcos Department. They battered her in the presence of her family and ransacked her home. The family has now fled the area in fear of their lives.

Approximately two months ago, Alberta Velásquez fled her home in Guatemala City after learning that heavily armed men had asked neighbours about her husband’s whereabouts and a group of armed men driving a car with tinted windows had been looking for her son. Unknown individuals were also overheard threatening to kill Efraín Bámaca’s surviving relatives. At about the same time, Josefina Bámaca Velásquez’ family home in a remote Guatemalan village was raided and ransacked by heavily armed men.

Efraín Bámaca “disappeared” after being detained by the Guatemalan army in 1992. It is believed that the recent threats and attacks against his family may be in reprisal for relatives’ role in obtaining Inter-American Court rulings against the government. In December 2000 the Guatemalan government was found responsible for his secret detention, torture, and extrajudicial execution. In March 2002, the Court ordered the government to pay compensation to his surviving relatives by the end of the year. The Court also ordered the government to return Efraín Bámaca’s remains to his widow and to publish its findings on the case in the Guatemalan press. These two final conditions have yet to be fulfilled, but the compensation was apparently paid out in early December 2002.

The terms of the compensation agreement were to have been kept confidential in the interests of the family’s security. However, those carrying out the attacks on the Bámaca family appear to have learned that they had received the compensation payment and may have been trying to obtain the money. During the attacks against both Egidia Bámaca Velasquez and Josefina Bámaca Velasquez the assailants repeatedly demanded “Where is it?” in an apparent reference to the payment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

At the time of his capture, torture and extrajudicial execution, Efraín Bámaca Velasquez was a commander with the guerrilla movement *Organización del Pueblo en Armas* (ORPA), Organization of the People in Arms. This formed part of the umbrella guerrilla movement which waged a civil conflict against the Guatemala military for a period of more than 30 years, until final Peace Accords were agreed in 1996.

Throughout the ten years since Efraín Bámaca’s capture, Ms Harbury, her lawyers, witnesses, and others associated with the case have been subjected to repeated threats and acts of intimidation. Earlier this year, a witness in the case who had relocated to the United States, received threatening phone calls warning him to cease his involvement in the case.

In the past, those involved in anti-impunity initiatives intended to identify those responsible for massive human rights violations during the years of conflict have been particular targets of threats and intimidation. These have reportedly been carried out by groups linked to the country’s armed forces.

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

- expressing serious concern for the safety of Alberta Velásquez, Josefina Bámaca Velásquez, Egidia Bámaca Velásquez, their families, and others associated with the “disappearance” of Efraín Bámaca;
- urging the authorities to take necessary measures to ensure their safety;
- asking the authorities to immediately, independently and exhaustively investigate the various incidents directed against the sisters, including the recent beating of Egidia Bámaca Velásquez; to make the results public, and to bring those responsible to justice;
- insisting that the authorities comply with the remaining terms of the Inter-American Court's judgment, including the return of Efraín Bámaca's remains and the publication of the Court's findings in the Guatemalan press.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic of Guatemala

Lic. Alfonso Portillo Cabrera
Presidente de la República de Guatemala
6a. Avenida "A" 4-41,
Zona 1, Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Telegram: Presidente de la República de Guatemala, Guatemala
City, Guatemala**

Fax: + 502 238 3579

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President

Secretary of Strategic Analysis

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

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

Fax: +502 232 2886

Salutation: Señor Secretario/Dear Secretary

Presidential Human Rights Commission (COPREDEH)

Sr. Alfonso Fuentes Soria
Presidente de COPREDEH
Comisión Presidencial Coordinadora de la Política del Ejecutivo en materia
de Derechos Humanos
13 Calle 15-33, Zona 13
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegram: Presidente de COPREDEH, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax: +502 334 1407/1615

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Salutation: Señor Secretario/Dear Secretary

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Procurator

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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 January 2003.