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GUATEMALA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS FOR A COMPLETE INVESTIGATION OF THE BAMACA CASE AND FOR PROTECTION OF THOSE INVOLVED IN GUATEMALA AND IN THE US

In a letter addressed to the Minister of the Interior, Rodolfo Mendoza, on 29 January 1996, Amnesty International urges the Government of Guatemala to guarantee the safety of those involved in the investigation of the fate of Efraín Bámaca.

The human rights organization is particularly concerned for the safety of Efraín Bámaca's wife, Jennifer Harbury, her lawyer and the public prosecutor appointed to this case.

Two recent incidents highlight the risk faced by those involved in the case. On 5 January 1996, a bomb partially destroyed the car of Mrs Harbury's lawyer in Washington. On 6 January, shots were fired at Mrs Harbury's residence in that city. The incidents are taking place at a time when Mrs Harbury is frequently travelling to Guatemala to follow the judicial investigation of the case. The investigation includes another exhumation in the military base of *Las Cañadas*, in the *Departamento de San Marcos*.

In another letter addressed to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) of the United States, Amnesty International demands from the US authorities that an exhaustive and immediate investigation into these two incidents be opened and that the results and methods of such an investigation be made public. In addition, the human rights organization urges the US authorities to provide Jennifer Harbury and José Pertierra the necessary protection while in the US.

In June 1995, the then prosecutor assigned to the case in Guatemala announced that he had received death threats. On 22 June, shots were fired at his office while he was inside. Jennifer Harbury and her previous legal representative also announced that they had received death threats in connection with the case.

Amnesty International urges the new government of Guatemala to provide all the necessary assistance to the Public Ministry for the completion of all the legal procedures in the investigation into the case. The human rights organization hopes that the circumstances surrounding the fate of Efraín Bámaca will be clarified and that those responsible for the illegal acts related to his "disappearance", alleged torture, and extralegal execution will be brought to justice.

BACKGROUND

Efraín Bámaca, a leader of the armed opposition, "disappeared" in March 1992 after apparently being wounded in a clash with the Guatemalan army. The army said that he had died in combat but irregularities in the information given by the authorities together with recent revelations by US

Congressman Robert Torricelli and others strongly suggest that he died in custody. The revelations earlier this year by the US Congressman concerning the fate of the guerrilla leader, and the possible cover-up by US officials, has sparked renewed interest in the case both in Guatemala and abroad. Jennifer Harbury, a US lawyer who married Efraín Bámaca in 1991, has led a high profile campaign to clarify the truth surrounding his death and has returned to Guatemala on several occasions to observe exhumations of sites where his body is said to have been buried.

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