

PUBLIC

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UA 38/04 Fear for Safety/ Death Threats/ Intimidation

03 February 2004

GUATEMALA Orlando Joaquín Blanco Lapola (m), human rights defender

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Orlando Joaquín Blanco Lapola, director of the International Human Rights Investigation Centre, *Centro Internacional de Investigaciones en Derechos Humanos* (CIIDH) who received telephone threats on 16 and 30 January and again on 2 February. The calls were abusive and threatened him with death— "*Si sigues chingando te vas a morir hijo de puta*"

Although the identity of the callers is unknown, Amnesty International is concerned that these threats could be coming from illegal armed groups or structures implicated in ongoing attacks against human rights defenders. It is therefore likely that Sr. Blanco is being targeted because of his involvement in the development of the *Comisión para la Investigación de Cuerpos Ilegales y Aparatos Clandestinos de Seguridad*, Commission to Investigate Illegal Armed Groups and Clandestine Security Apparatus (CICIACS) agreement.

Sr. Blanco received a wave of threatening calls during 2003 related to his human rights work which he reported to the Public Ministry and the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office, *Procuraduría de Derechos Humanos*.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Human rights defenders in Guatemala continue to experience persistent threats and intimidation which are frequently carried out by members of state security forces. In many instances, attacks are commissioned or perpetrated by quasi-official power structures based on systems of political favours.

During her visit to Guatemala in May 2002, Hina Jilani, UN Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders expressed her concern by stating: "I am very concerned at the attempts to discredit human rights defenders and to underestimate the dangers that they are exposed to."

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

- expressing concern about the telephone threats and intimidation against Orlando Joaquín Blanco Lapola;
- calling for a full, prompt and impartial investigation into these death threats, for the results to be made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging that immediate measures are taken to ensure the safety of Orlando Joaquín Blanco Lapola;
- expressing grave concern that it is increasingly difficult for human rights defenders like Orlando Joaquín Blanco Lapola to carry out their legitimate work on behalf of victims of human rights violations;
- urging the Guatemalan government to adhere to principles contained in the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect; Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom which recognizes the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders and their right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic of Guatemala

President Óscar Berger

President of the Republic of Guatemala

6 a. Avenida, 4-18 zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegrams: President Óscar Berger, Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: +502 238 3579

Salutation: Dear President/ Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente

Public Prosecutor

Sr. Carlos David de León Argueta

Ministerio Público

8a. Av. 10-67, Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Telegrams: Sr. Carlos David de León Argueta, Ministerio Público, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax: + 502 221 2718

Salutation: Dear Minister/ Sr. Ministro

COPIES TO:

President of the Presidential Human Rights Commission

Lic. Frank La Rue

Presidente de Comisión Presidencial de Derechos Humanos (COPREDEH)

13 Calle 15-33, Zona 134

Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax: + 502 334 1407

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 16 March 2004.