

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 34/06/93
Distr: UA/SC

UA 52/93 Fear for safety/Attempted extrajudicial execution 1 March 1993

GUATEMALA: Carlos Gómez [male]

Amnesty International is concerned at the reported attack on Carlos Gómez, Deputy Secretary of the Unión de Trabajadores de Quetzaltenango (UTQ), Quetzaltenango Workers' Union, as he was travelling from Guatemala City to Quetzaltenango on the night of 25 February 1993.

According to information received by Amnesty International, at about 10.00 pm on 25 February, several armed men with balaclava hats (*pasamontañas*) covering their faces intercepted the bus Carlos Gómez was travelling in near kilometer 170 of the road from Guatemala City to Quetzaltenango, firing at the tyres. When the bus stopped, four men got into the bus and forced all the passengers, except Carlos Gómez, to get off. They went towards Carlos Gómez and took away his video camera, audio and photographic materials which he had brought back from a recent visit to the Comunidades de Población en Resistencia (CPR), Communities of Peoples in Resistance and the resettlements in Ixcán, El Quiché department for refugees recently returned from Mexico. The men then shot him and ran away. Carlos Gómez has, since then, undergone two operations, and his condition remains delicate.

During his visit to the CPR and former refugee settlements, Carlos Gómez had taken extensive footage and photographs, and had carried out interviews on the living conditions at the places he had visited.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Tens of thousands of peasants, mostly indigenous, were killed or "disappeared" in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a result of army counter-insurgency operations. Thousands of others were internally displaced or went into exile in neighbouring countries. The Communities of Peoples in Resistance are made up of villagers who fled the army counter-insurgency operations, and have since remained in Guatemala in areas outside army control. The army have consistently maintained they are guerrillas, and have made them the object of severe bombings and land attacks. In 1991 a Multi-Partite commission, made up by the Guatemalan Episcopal Conference, the Guatemalan Religious Conference, and other Church and trade Union groups as well as the Human Rights Attorney's Office, was set up to investigate the situation of the CPR. Since then, the Commission has made several visits and recognized their status as civilian, non-combatant population. The last visit in which Carlos Gómez participated also passed by the settlements of the former Guatemalan refugees who recently returned from Mexico, in the area known as Polígono 14, Ixcán.

Sectors within the armed forces have repeatedly linked refugees in Mexico with the armed opposition, and Amnesty International has received reports that those working on behalf of refugees have been singled out for human rights abuses by members of the security forces. In May 1992, one group working on the preparations for the return of the refugees received written death threats warning them to stop their work.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in Spanish, English or your own language:

- expressing concern at the attack against Carlos Gómez after a visit to the CPR;

- urging that a full investigation be immediately opened into the attack and that those found responsible be brought to justice;
- asking that necessary steps be taken to guarantee his safety.

APPEALS TO

1) President of the Republic:

S.E. Jorge Serrano Elías
Presidente de la República de Guatemala
Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, Guatemala
Telegrams: Presidente Serrano, Guatemala, Guatemala
Telephone: + 502 2 21212 / + 502 2 22266
Faxes: + 502 2 537472 / + 502 2 519702
Telexes: 5331 CAPRES GU

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President

2) Minister of the Interior:

Lic. Francisco Perdomo
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Despacho Ministerial
Oficina No. 8, Primer Nivel
Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, Guatemala
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Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister

3) Minister of Defence:

Gral. José García Samayoa
Jefe del Estado Mayor de Defensa Nacional
Ministerio de Defensa
Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, Guatemala
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Telexes: 5361 COMGUA GU

Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister

4) Interim Attorney General:

Lic. Edgar Tuna Valladares
Procurador General de la Nación
Procuraduría General de la Nación
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Salutation: Señor Procurador General / Dear Attorney General

COPIES TO:

Newspaper:

Diario Siglo XXI

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Zona 9, Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Human Rights Procurator:

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Procurador de Derechos Humanos
Avenida Simeón Cañas 10-61
Zona 2, Guatemala
GUATEMALA

Unión de Trabajadores de Quetzaltenango

1a. Calle 17-48
Zona 1, Quetzaltenango
GUATEMALA

Presidential Commission Coordinating the
Policies of the Executive in Human Rights Matters

Lic. Bernardo Neumann
Presidente
COPREDEH
15 Avenida 18-38
Zona 13, Guatemala
GUATEMALA

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 12 April 1993.