

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 34/13/92

UA 91/92

Threats/Harassment

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17 March 1992

GUATEMALA

David Estuardo MEJÍA PAIZ, aged 17

Axel MEJÍA PAIZ

Amnesty International is concerned at the recent abduction of David Estuardo Mejía Paiz, on 12 March 1992 in Guatemala City. David Estuardo Mejía is the brother of Axel Mejía Paiz, a street educator with Casa Alianza (Covenant House), who has been the target of numerous death threats.

According to testimony given to Covenant House, on 12 March 1992, David Estuardo Mejía Paiz was walking towards his home in Zone 21, when a man in plain clothes put a gun to his head and told him not to resist or he would be shot. Three other men forced David Mejía into a black vehicle with polarized windows. He was then taken to a dark room and was held there for approximately forty-five minutes before being taken by one of the assailants to what David Mejía described as a zaguán (passage-way). He was told to telephone his brother Axel Mejía, but when he said his brother did not have a telephone, the assailant told him to telephone anyone who could pass on a message to his brother that "ni él ni su hermana tenían la culpa de lo que había hecho Axel" ("neither he nor his sister were to blame for what Axel had done"). David Mejía was then taken back to the dark room and blindfolded. One of the assailants lit a match and burned the right sleeve of David Mejía's sweater, and all the while asked David Mejía if Axel Mejía was in Guatemala or if he had left the country. David Mejía then heard one of the assailants say to another "¿lo matamos, vos?" ("shall we kill him, then?"), while they laughed. After a while David Mejía slept and when he awoke he saw that he was back in the car in which he had been abducted. The assailants stopped the car on the Puente Belice (Belize Bridge) and told him that they were not going to kill him, but wanted this to be a warning to his brother, Axel Mejía, of what they were capable of doing. David Mejía was released early on the morning of 13 March. Axel Mejía believes his brother's abduction was directly related to his work with Covenant House. The family has in the past month been the subject of serious harassment and their home has been under surveillance.

Axel Mejía Paiz, is the Supervisor of the Crisis Centre of the Casa Alianza (Covenant House) refuge in Guatemala City. Covenant House is an organization working with street children in Guatemala. Alex Mejía was the principal witness to an incident which occurred on 7 November 1990, when thirteen members of the police unit Sistema de Protección Cívica (SIPROCI), System of Civil Protection, four members of the National Police, five members of the Treasury Police and four Military Police), beat three street children in front of a refuge run by Covenant House. Legal proceedings were subsequently initiated against one of the Treasury Police, identified as the principal aggressor, and Axel Mejía gave evidence in the criminal proceedings against the accused agents. Since that time, he has been constantly threatened and harassed. (See UA 499/90, AMR 34/78/90, 13 December 1990 and follow-up AMR 34/15/91, 2 May 1991).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the past two years, Amnesty International has received an escalating number of reports of human rights violations against street children in Guatemala City, including beatings,

torture, "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions, reportedly carried out by official security force agents, particularly the police, acting sometimes in plain clothes and sometimes in uniform (see Guatemala: Extrajudicial Executions and Human Rights Violations against Street Children, AMR 34/37/90, August 1990).

Approximately 62 legal suits against more than 50 National Police are currently pending with the Guatemalan courts and only in isolated cases have investigations resulted in the prosecution of those responsible. Children who have witnessed or given information concerning abuses directed against other street children have been subjected to reprisals, and those working with street children have also been subjected to harassment and intimidation. On 6 March 1992 16 street children and youths were arrested by more than 35 agents of the Policía Militar Ambulante (PMA), Mobile Military Police in Guatemala City, during which many of the children were ill-treated. (See UA 85/92, AI Index: AMR 34/11/92, 11 March 1992)

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- express concern at the abduction, interrogation and threats against David Mejía Paiz by four unidentified men;
- ask that this incident be immediately investigated and that those found responsible be brought to justice;
- asking for guarantees for the safety of all members of the Mejía family, particularly Axel Mejía, who appeared to be the main target of the threats.

APPEALS TO

1) President:
S.E. Jorge Serrano Elías
Presidente de la República de
Guatemala
Palacio Nacional, Guatemala,
Guatemala
Telegrams: Presidente Serrano,
Guatemala, Guatemala
Telexes: 5331 CAPRES GU
Faxes: + 502 2 537472; + 502 2
519702
Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr.
Presidente / Dear President

2) Minister of the Interior:
Lic. Fernando Hurtado Prem
Ministro de Gobernación
Despacho Ministerial
Oficina No. 8, Primer Nivel
Palacio Nacional, Guatemala,
Guatemala
Telegrams: Ministro Gobernación,
Guatemala, Guatemala
Telexes: 5085 MINGOB GU
Faxes: + 502 2 518105
Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear
Minister

3) Director of National Police:
Lic Carlos Enrique Samayoa Cifuentes

Director General de la Policía
Nacional
6 Avenida 13-71,
Zona-1, Guatemala, Guatemala
Telegrams: Director Policía,
Guatemala, Guatemala
Salutation: Señor Director / Dear
Director

4) Attorney General:
Señor Acisclo Valladares
Procurador General de la Nación
Procuraduría General de la Nación
18 Calle 10-36
Zona 1, Guatemala, Guatemala
Telegrams: Procurador General,
Guatemala, Guatemala
Salutation: Señor Procurador General
/ Dear Attorney General

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO AT LEAST ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

1) Human Rights Procurator:
Lic. Ramiro de León Carpio
Procurador de Derechos Humanos
Avenida Simeón Cañas 10-61

Zona 2, Guatemala, Guatemala
Faxes: +502 2 512026

2) Pro-children Commission of

Congress:

Señor Presidente
Comisión Pro-Niñez
Congreso de la República
7ta Avenida y 9a Calle
Zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala,
Guatemala

3) Casa Alianza
Apartado Postal 2704
Guatemala, Guatemala

4) Newspaper:

Siglo XXI
7a Avenida 11-79
Edificio Galerias España, 6o piso
Zona 9, Guatemala, Guatemala

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 28 April 1992.