



PUBLIC

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Helen Mack (second left) and a colleague at a recent meeting with an AI delegation to Guatemala

27 April 1999

Further information on UA 83/99 (AMR 34/10/99, 21 April 1999) - Fear for safety

GUATEMALA Ronalith Ochaeta (Archbishop's Human Rights Office), church figures, and others involved with ODHA and the REMHI report

And new name: Helen Mack

A recent apparent threat against Helen Mack, Director of the Guatemalan human rights group, the *Fundación Myrna Mack*, Myrna Mack Foundation, highlights Amnesty International's continuing concern for the safety of human rights workers in Guatemala, including those involved with the Guatemalan church's 1998 REMHI, Recuperation of the Historical Memory Report, and those pressing for clarification of the murder of Bishop Gerardi.

On 26 April 1999 a stone wrapped in a plastic bag was left outside the doors of a church in Guatemala city where Helen Mack was attending the funeral mass of her father, who had died two days earlier. Local human rights monitors believe the act was an attempt to intimidate her.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This follows the incident on 16 April when armed men raided the home of Ronalith Ochaeta, director of the *Oficina de Derechos Humanos del arzobispado* (ODHA) Archbishop's Human Rights Office, and left a block of stone behind. The pieces of rock appear to be allusions to the cement block used to batter Bishop Juan José Gerardi Conedera to death a year ago (see UA 139/98, 1 May 1999, AMR 34/16/98). Ronalith Ochaeta has been referred to as the late Bishop's "right-hand man".

The apparent effort to intimidate Helen Mack also follows a series of other recent threats against Guatemalan church figures and others who have worked with ODHA and/or the REMHI report.

The apparent threat against Helen Mack was made on day of the anniversary of Bishop Gerardi's death, when tens of thousands of people had taken to the streets to call for his killers to be brought to justice.

Pressure continues to mount on the Guatemalan government to identify and bring to justice those responsible for Bishop Gerardi's murder. Pope John Paul II, who had a private audience with President Alvaro Arzú last week, prominent figures in the US Catholic Church, and a spokesperson for the United States Department of State are all urging the government to make progress on the case.

The Myrna Mack Foundation was established in memory of Helen's sister, Myrna, who was killed in Guatemala City in 1990, apparently because of her work as an anthropologist with people then displaced by the civil conflict. Although an army sergeant was convicted of the murder in 1993, Helen Mack has continued to press for those who ordered the killing to be brought to justice as well. She and others working with the Foundation have been the targets of frequent threats and intimidation.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/e-mails/express/airmail letters in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Helen Mack, the church figures and ODHA workers who have recently been threatened, and for all those working for the protection of human rights in Guatemala;
- calling for immediate and adequate measures to guarantee their safety;
- calling for an immediate and thorough investigation into the reported threats and intimidation against Ronalht Ochaeta and Helen Mack and urging that those responsible are brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to bring to justice anyone found to have been involved in the murder of Bishop Gerardi, regardless of their position.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic of Guatemala

S.E. Álvaro Arzú Irigoyen, Presidente de la República de Guatemala
Palacio Nacional, 6ª Calle y 7ª Avenida, Zona 1
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegrams: Presidente, Guatemala, Guatemala

Faxes: + 502 221 4537 / 230 1508

E-mails: alvaroarzu@guate.net / alvaroarzu@guateconnect.com

Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Irigoyen

Minister of Foreign Relations

Lic. Eduardo Stein, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
Palacio Nacional, 6ª Calle y 7ª Avenida, Zona 1
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegrams:Ministro Relaciones Exteriores, Guatemala, Guatemala

Faxes:+ 502 251 8445

E-mails:mint@mieno.gt

Salutation:Señor Ministro / Dear Minister

Attorney General

Lic. Adolfo González Rodas, Fiscal General de la República
Ministerio Público, 6ª Avenida 3-11, Zona 4
Ciudad de Guatemala , GUATEMALA

Telegrams:Fiscal General, Guatemala, Guatemala

Faxes: + 502 362 7223

Salutation: Señor Fiscal / Dear Attorney General

Procurator General

Lic. Carlos García Regás, Procurador General de la Nación
Procuraduría General de la Nación, 15 Avenida 9-69, Zona 13
Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegrams:Procurador General, Guatemala, Guatemala

Faxes: + 502 334 8465

Salutation:Señor Procurador / Dear Attorney General

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13 Calle 9-31, Zona 1, Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Faxes: + 502 251 8768

E-mails: medioselectronicos@prensalibre.com.gt

Fundación Myrna Mack

6a Calle 1-36 Zona 10, Edificio Valzari, Of. 504
Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Faxes: + 502 332 5846
E-mails: fmmack@omega.net.gt

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 2 June 1999.