

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 34/25/98

UA 190/98

Fear for safety

3 July 1998

GUATEMALAMembers of Mamá Maquín organization

Amnesty International is concerned about recent attacks, death threats and acts of intimidation against members of the women's organization, *Mamá Maquín*, which works with returned refugees and displaced people in Guatemala.

On 17 June 1998, at about 3 a.m, several men armed with grenades, machetes and firearms assaulted a group of some 30 women members as they were coming back from a meeting in the returned refugee community *Victoria 20 de Enero*, Ixcán municipality, El Quiché department. The assailants beat up several women with the broadsides of their machetes and stole their personal goods. Witnesses said that the men also tore up the papers from the meeting and cursed the women and their organization.

The same day, members of *Mamá Maquín* in Guatemala City reported receiving death threats and messages of intimidation in a phone call from unidentified men who urged them to give up their struggle on behalf of returned refugee women.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International believes that these intimidatory acts and death treats against members of *Mama Maquín* are connected to their activities as defenders of women's rights in Guatemala.

The recent attacks against them contravene the Global Human Rights Accord, signed on 23 March 1994 between the *Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca* (URNG), the Guatemalan Armed Revolutionary Unit, the former armed opposition, and the Guatemalan Government, which states in clause 7 that: "The Government of the Republic of Guatemala shall take measures to protect persons and institutions working in the field of human rights."

Mamá Maquín has attempted to fill the gap left by the government's failure to fulfill its obligation under the Agreement for the Resettlement of Populations Uprooted by the Armed Conflict, signed by the Government and the URNG in June 1994. In this agreement the government committed itself to guaranteeing the conditions necessary for the safe return of returned refugees and the internally displaced, and assuring that the human rights of this vulnerable sector are respected.

In the department of El Quiché, in particular the municipalities of Ixcán and Nebaj, there have been continued reports of human rights violations against returnees, internally displaced people and those working with them. Few cases of this kind have been investigated adequately by the government and in even fewer cases have those responsible for such acts been brought to justice.

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

- urging the authorities to take immediate steps to guarantee the safety of members of the women's organization *Mamá Maquín*;
- appealing for an inquiry into the attack, acts of intimidation and death threats against members of *Mamá Maquín* on 17 June 1998, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;

- calling for all necessary steps to effectively prevent threats, intimidation or other human rights violations against women's organizations and other human rights defenders in line with the March 1994 Global Human Rights Accord;
- calling for all necessary steps to ensure the safety of returned refugees and internally displaced people as stipulated under the Agreement for the Resettlement of Populations Uprooted by the Armed Conflict.

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**E-mails: alvaroarzu@guateconnect.com / alvaroarzu@guate.net****Faxes + 502 221 4537/230 1502/253 7472****Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President**Minister of Interior

Lic. Rodolfo Mendoza Rosales

Ministro de Gobernación

Ministerio de Gobernación

Despacho Ministerial, Of. N° 8

Palacio Nacional, 6ª Calle y 7ª Avenida, Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegrams: Ministro Gobernación, Guatemala, Guatemala**Faxes: + 502 251 5368****Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister**Private Secretary to the President

Sr. Gustavo Porras

Secretario Privado del Presidente de la República

Palacio Nacional, 6ª Calle y 7ª Avenida, Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala , GUATEMALA

Telegrams: Gustavo Porras, Guatemala, Guatemala**Salutation: Señor Secretario / Dear Secretary**Governor of El Quiché

Sr. Miguel Medrano Bulux

Gobernador de El Quiché

Santa Cruz del Quiché, El Quiché

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Telefax: +502 755 1433**Salutation: Señor Gobernador / Dear Governor****COPIES TO:**Mamá Maquín organization

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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 14 August 1998.