

UA 118/02

Possible

GUATEMALA César Posadas (m)

Edgar López (m)

Mario Castro (m)

Other employees of the *Tipografía Nacional* (National Printing Office)

Conchita Mazariegos (f)] lawyers

Alfonso Novales (m)]

Anabella de León (f), Congressional Deputy

Magda Arceo (f), former Congressional Deputy

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**Killed: César Augusto Rodas Furlán (m) - *Tipografía* employee**

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The head of Guatemala's National Printing Office has fled the country to escape death threats, after she accused Vice President Juan Francisco Reyes of illegally ordering the Office to print leaflets attacking another official.

Plant workers whose testimony supported her accusation have received death threats, and one has been murdered. Amnesty International believes that all those named above are in grave danger.

In August 2001 Vice President Reyes allegedly ordered the printing press to produce leaflets attacking the head of the Guatemalan Chamber of Commerce, Jorge Briz. The leaflets were apparently intended to cast doubt on Briz's allegations that the *Tipografía Nacional* (National Printing Press) was producing false identity papers for government supporters, so they could vote more than once in upcoming elections.

The then head of the plant, Silvia Josefina Méndez Recinos, accused Reyes of abuse of authority and misusing public funds. The charges were backed up by testimony from plant workers. Shortly afterwards armed men tried to force their way into Méndez's house, and she began receiving death threats. She has since gone into exile with her family. The Public Prosecutor's Office, Congress and the UN Verification Mission, MINUGUA, are all investigating the charges.

Rodas Furlán was a key witness, who was not only involved in the illegal printing of the leaflets, but also had the names of those who picked up the leaflets and the licenses of the vehicles they used to transport them. He asked for protection, and made enquiries about seeking asylum abroad, but was shot dead on 15 February. The authorities insist he was a victim of a common crime, but human rights groups believe Furlán was murdered to eliminate him as a witness and intimidate others involved in the case.

César Posadas operated a print machine that produced some of the leaflets. Earlier this month he went into hiding, after a series of telephoned death threats. His colleague Edgar López received similar threats, and on 15 April the Public Prosecutor's Office moved him to a safe house. However, after two days they told him that the safe house was no longer available, and took him back to his home. Two days later, Mario Castro reported that five armed men had attacked his wife and son. Witnesses saw police arrest two of the men, but the police later claimed they had arrested no one.

Congressional Deputies Magda Arceo and Anabella de León, members of two different opposition political parties, took up the investigation. Cars with tinted windows reportedly began regularly following them and members of their families, including Arceo's children. Both also reported repeated telephoned threats and warnings. They told Amnesty International that one caller told

them to "be very careful, as State security agents were following us and were going to stage an 'accident'" ("*Que tuviéramos mucho cuidado, porque algunas personas de seguridad del Estado nos seguirían...y fingirían un accidente.*") Arceo resigned her Congressional post in October, and left the country with her family. She has returned on several occasions however, in connection with the case and was in the country when César Augusto Rodas Furlán was killed.

Two lawyers, Conchita Mazariegos and Alfonso Novales, who filed the accusations against the Vice President, have also reported receiving threats. In March the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights asked for "precautionary measures" (*medidas cautelares*) for them and five *Tipografía* employees. These measure are reportedly now in place for the witnesses, but those involved in the case are still in danger, and several witnesses reportedly intend to seek asylum abroad.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of the people named above, who have been threatened and intimidated since they have been involved in accusations of abuse of office by Vice President Reyes;
- calling on the authorities to investigate the killing of witness César Augusto Rodas Furlán, and bring those responsible to justice;
- pressing them to ensure the security of all those involved in the case;
- urging that the allegations against the Vice President be investigated thoroughly, and any wrongdoing punished appropriately, in the interest of preventing further human rights violations.

**APPEALS TO:**

President of the Republic of Guatemala  
Lic. Alfonso Portillo Cabrera  
Presidente de la República de Guatemala  
6a. Avenida "A" 4-41, Zona 1  
Ciudad de Guatemala , GUATEMALA

**Telegram: Presidente de la República de Guatemala, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala**

**Fax: + 502 239 0090**

**Salutation: Excelentísimo**

Attorney General

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

**Telegram: Procurator General de la Nación, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala**

**Fax: + 502 332 1804**

**Salutation: Señor Procurador**

President of Congress

Gral. Efraín Ríos Montt  
Presidente del Congreso  
9ª Avenida 9-44, Zona 1  
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Telegram: Presidente del Congreso, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala**

**Fax: + 502 220 4024**

**Salutation: Señor Presidente del Congreso/Dear Congressional President**

**COPIES TO:**

Director of the Government Printing Plant  
Carlos Rafael Soto  
Director, Tipografía General de la República  
18 Calle, 6-72, Zona 1  
Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Newspapers  
Diario El Periódico  
15 Ave 24-51, Zona 13  
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Fax: + 502 332 9761**

Diario Prensa Libre  
13 Calle 9-31  
Zona 1, Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Fax: + 502 251 8768/230 2193/230 2257**

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 3 June 2002.