

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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*Please bring this action to the attention of the person in your section responsible for work on indigenous peoples, medical action and women.*

UA 189/92

Death Threats

5 June 1992

GUATEMALA: Doctor Carlos LEÓN MEDRANO, doctor

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Amnesty International is concerned at the recent reported death threats against Dr Carlos León Medrano, a medical doctor working in Chichicastenango, El Quiché department.

Dr León Medrano, of Quiché indigenous origin, works with the Centro Cultural de Asistencia Médica (CCAM), Cultural Centre for Medical Assistance, a non-governmental organization which provides medical training to indigenous mid-wives, using traditional methods. According to information received by Amnesty International, on the morning of 31 May 1992 an anonymous woman caller telephoned the home of Dr León's mother and said "*la vida de su hijo que es médico y trabaja en Chichicastenango está en peligro. Mejor que se retire de este lugar. Soy una amiga de Carlos*" ("the life of your son, who is a medical doctor and works in Chichicastenango is in danger. It would be better if he left the area. I am a friend of Carlos").

On the same morning, a man who does not wish to be identified for fear of reprisals also told Dr León Medrano's wife that her husband should leave the area as his life was in danger. It has also been reported that members of the armed forces had been making enquiries about Dr León a few days before the death threats were received. Amnesty International is concerned for his safety.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The CCAM works in cooperation with other non-governmental organizations in Guatemala, including the office of Caritas, a Roman Catholic relief agency, in the diocese of El Quiché and other organizations involved in issues related to the preservation of the Mayan culture and identity. Dr León Medrano worked with Julio Quevedo Quezada, an agronomist with Caritas who was involved in developing agricultural projects using organic methods in the department of El Quiché. On 15 July 1991 Julio Quevedo Quezada was shot and killed in front of his wife and three children, near his home in Santa Cruz del Quiché in circumstances indicating security force involvement. Julio Quevedo had received death threats prior to his killing. The killing is said to be under investigation by the Justice of the Peace in El Quiché, but the perpetrators have not been brought to justice.

Dr León Medrano has worked on projects involving indigenous Guatemalans in the highland department of El Quiché, where guerrillas were active in the late 1970's and early 1980's. Tens of thousands of indigenous peoples were killed or "disappeared" as a result of army counter-insurgency operations in the area; thousands of others were displaced or forced into exile as successive military governments sought to eliminate

any potential source of political sympathy or logistical support for the armed opposition. Many who have worked with indigenous peoples or who have sought to publicize their fate have themselves been subjected to human rights violations.

President Jorge Serrano Elías came to power in January 1991. During his presidential campaign he had pledged to ensure protection of human rights. However, Amnesty International remains seriously concerned at continuing human rights violations in Guatemala, including extrajudicial executions, death threats, torture and "disappearances". Even in cases where the identity of the

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perpetrators is unclear, the choice of victim and the manner in which the abuses have been carried out frequently suggest the involvement of members of the official security forces.

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

- expressing concern at the death threats against Dr Carlos León Medrano;
- asking for an investigation into the origins of the threats and that those responsible be brought to justice;
- asking for guarantees for the safety of Dr Carlos León Medrano and others involved in social projects aimed at improving the welfare of indigenous peoples in Guatemala.

**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**

3) Minister of Defence:  
Gral. José García Samayoa  
Ministro de Defensa  
Ministerio de Defensa  
Palacio Nacional  
Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa,**  
**Guatemala, Guatemala**  
**Telephone: + 502 2 21212, + 502 2 2226**  
**Telexes: 5361 COMGUA GU**  
  
**Salutation: Sr. Ministro /**  
**Dear Minister**

2) Minister of Interior:  
Lic. Fernando Hurtado Prem  
Ministro de Gobernación  
Ministerio de Gobernación  
Despacho Ministerial, Of. No. 8  
Palacio Nacional  
Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Telegrams: Ministro de Gobernación,**  
**Guatemala, Guatemala**  
**Telephone: + 502 2 21212 ext. 500,**  
**+ 502 2 518105-6 (direct)**  
**Faxes: + 502 2 518105**  
**Telexes: 5085 MINGOB**  
  
**Salutation: Sr. Ministro /**  
**Dear Minister**

4) Commander of El Quiché Military Base:  
Comandante  
Base Militar No. 20  
Santa Cruz del Quiché, El Quiché  
GUATEMALA  
**Telegrams: Comandante, Base Militar,**  
**Santa Cruz del Quiché, El**  
**Quiché, Guatemala**  
**Telephone: + 502 9 551005/551548/551199**  
  
**Salutation: Sr. Comandante/**  
**Dear Commander**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:**

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| 1) <u>Human Rights Procurator:</u><br>Lic. Ramiro de León Carpio<br>Procurador de Derechos Humanos<br>Avenida Simeón Cañas 10-60 Zona 2,<br>Guatemala, GUATEMALA     | 3) <u>Roman Catholic Relief Agency:</u><br>Caritas Diocesana<br>Pastoral Social<br>6a Calle 10-10, Zona 3<br>Santa Cruz del Quiché 14001<br>El Quiché, GUATEMALA |
| 2) <u>Indigenous Commission of Congress:</u><br>Comission de Comunidades Indígenas<br>Congreso Nacional de la República<br>9 Av 9-48, Zona 1<br>Guatemala, GUATEMALA | 4) <u>Newspaper:</u><br><u>Diario Prensa Libre</u><br>13 Calle 9-31, 50 Nivel<br>Edificio Prensa Libre<br>Zona 1, 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 17 July 1992.