

EXTERNAL

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Fear for safety

24 September 1996

GUATEMALA Víctor Hugo Durán Guerra  
Félix Hernández  
José María Ortega  
Jaime Manfredo Díaz Celada

- all members of the "22 February" General Trade Union of Guatel Workers

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of trade union leader Víctor Hugo Durán Guerra, who has suffered two attempts on his life and continuous death threats. The organization is also concerned for the safety of other trade unionists: Félix Hernández Gálvez, José María Ortega and Jaime Manfredo Díaz Celada, following death threats against them.

According to reports, on 5 September, at 5.30pm, two men driving a motorcycle shot at Víctor Durán, General Secretary of the *Sindicato General de Trabajadores de Guatel "22 de Febrero"*, "22 February" General Trade Union of Guatel Workers, as he was driving between Guatemala City and Villanueva in the department of Guatemala. Although bullets penetrated his baggage and broke a car window, Víctor Durán was not injured. The next day, at about 12 midnight, a group of assailants in a white pick-up truck sprayed about 10 bullets at Víctor Durán's house, in the municipality of Villanueva. After the attack, the assailants remained outside the house for 20 minutes demanding that Víctor Durán come out. He and his family managed to hide and telephone some colleagues to contact the police who arrived one and half hours later.

Between 8 and 14 of September Víctor Durán received several telephone calls and several anonymous letters telling him to leave the country and stop his trade union activities. On 12 September two people went to his father's house, in Zone 6 of Guatemala City, and said "*dile a ese hijo de puta que salga del país*", "tell that son of a bitch to leave the country". Fearing for his life, Víctor Durán was forced to temporarily leave his country on 19 September.

On 20 September, Félix Hernández, labour adviser for the same trade union, was threatened in a note sent to their offices stating that he was the next on the list (after Víctor Hugo Durán) and that José María Ortega, union secretary, would be beaten up. On the same day, Jaime Manfredo Díaz Celada, secretary of conflicts, received a threatening telephone call. On the 21 September he was threatened again.

Amnesty International believes that Víctor Durán, Félix Hernández, José María Ortega and Jaime Manfredo Díaz Celada are being threatened in relation to their legitimate activities as trade unionists and that members of the security forces may be involved in the attacks.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Threats against Víctor Hugo Durán, Félix Hernández, José María Ortega and Jaime Manfredo Díaz Celada are believed to be related to their campaigning work against the privatization of the public telecommunications company *Guatel*. Throughout the 1980s, *Guatel* was renowned for the role it played in collecting military intelligence information.

The trade union sector has suffered consistent attacks under successive military regimes and civilian governments in Guatemala because of efforts to form trade unions and promote workers' rights in Guatemala. According to information

received by Amnesty International these attacks are carried out by members of the security forces or individuals acting on their behalf.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Víctor Hugo Durán, Félix Hernández, José María Ortega and Jaime Manfredo Díaz Celada and calling for immediate measures to guarantee their security and the safe return to Guatemala of Víctor Hugo Durán;
- calling for an immediate and full investigation into the attempts on the life of Víctor Hugo Durán and the threats against him and Félix Hernández, José María Ortega and Jaime Manfredo Díaz Celada, members of the "22 February" General Trade Union of Guatamel Workers;
- calling for the results of the investigations to be made public and those responsible to be brought to justice;
- noting that Amnesty International believes that the union members are being threatened in relation to their legitimate activists as union members;
- urging the authorities to adhere to Article 4 of the United Nations' (UN) Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions (Resolution 1989/65 of 24 May 1989), which calls for "effective protection through judicial or other means to be guaranteed to individuals and groups who are in danger of extra-legal, arbitrary or summary executions, including those who receive death threats."

**APPEALS TO:**

1) President of the Republic:

S.E. Álvaro Arzú Irigoyen  
 Presidente de la República de Guatemala  
 Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Faxes: (502) 221 45 37**  
**Telegrams: Presidente, Guatemala, GUATEMALA**  
**Salutation: Sr. Presidente /Dear President**

2) Minister of Interior:

Ministro de Gobernación,  
 Ministerio de Gobernación  
 Despacho Ministerial, Of. No. 8  
 Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Faxes: (502) 251 53 68**  
**Telegrams: Ministro de Gobernación, Guatemala, GUATEMALA**  
**Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister**

3) Head of the National Police

Lic. Ángel Antonio Conte Cajulún  
 Director General de la Policía Nacional  
 6 Avenida 13-71, Zona 1  
 Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Faxes: (502) 251 93 82**  
**Telegrams: Director General, Policia Nacional, Guatemala, Guatemala**  
**Salutation: Sr Director / Dear Chief of Police**

**COPIES TO:**

Fiscal General  
 Héctor Hugo Pérez Aguilera  
 Fiscal General de la Nación

Ministerio Público  
18 Calle 10-36, Zona 1  
Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Fax: (502) 331 7066**

Human Rights Procurator  
Lic. Jorge García Laguardia  
Procurador de los Derechos Humanos  
12 Avenida 12-72  
Zona 1, Guatemala  
GUATEMALA  
**Fax: (502) 238 1734**

COPREDEH  
Comisión Presidencial Coordinadora  
de la Política del Ejecutivo en  
materia de Derechos Humanos  
15 Avenida 18-38, Zona 13  
Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Fax: (502) 334 1615/334 1407**

Sindicato de trabajadores de Guatel  
12 Calle, 8-09  
Edificio Sánchez  
Zona 1, Guatemala Ciudad  
**Fax: (502) 238 1198**

Sr. Alfredo Gazarán  
Director de Guatel  
7<sup>a</sup> Avenida y 12 Calle.  
Edificio Central Guatel,  
Zona 1, Guatemala

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 10 November 1996.