

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 266/92 Ill-treatment/Death threats against street children

13 August 1992

GUATEMALA: Byron Geovanni CASTILLO, aged 14
José CHICAJUA, aged 15

Amnesty International is concerned at the reported ill-treatment and death threats against street children Byron Geovanni Castillo and José Chicajua, on 4 August 1992 in Guatemala City by members of the Guatemalan special police task force called *Hunapú*, Hunters.

According to information recently received by Amnesty International, on 4 August at around 11 pm, Byron Geovanni Castillo and José Chicajua were sitting with two other unidentified street children on the steps of a shop. Byron Castillo and José Chicajua were apparently reading a paper and the two other children were sniffing shoe glue when one uniformed member of the *Policía Nacional* (PN), National Police, and a uniformed *Guardia de Hacienda* (Treasury Guard) approached them.

The two children who were reportedly sniffing glue ran away and the two members of the security forces allegedly shouted at the remaining two, Byron Geovanni Castillo and José Chicajua, "*¿No oyen que les estoy hablando? ¡Aquí están esperando para ver que se pueden robar!*" ("Can't you hear me? Here you are waiting to see what you can steal!") and also insulted them. As the children apparently replied that they were not doing anything wrong, the two authorities saw the glue jars and grabbed them by their hair, carrying them between the empty stalls of a nearby market. According to the children's account, the two members of the security forces then started punching and kicking them in the legs, arms and chest. The authorities reportedly poured glue from the two containers onto the children's heads and then hit them again. Before letting the children go, one of the security members shouted: "*Váyanse al diablo y no vuelvan, pues si los volvemos a ver los vamos a matar*" ("Go to hell and do not come back because if we see you again we will kill you!")

Approximately one hour later in the same area, Byron Geovanni Castillo and José Chicajua identified the two members of the security forces who had ill-treated them in a *Hunapú* patrol.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Abuses against street children continue to take place in the context of police claims of an escalating crime rate, particularly in the capital, Guatemala City (see Guatemala: Children in Fear AMR 43/24/92, May 1992). The special task force *Hunapú*, comprising members of the *Policía Nacional* (PN), National Police, the *Policía de Hacienda*, Treasury Police and the *Policía Militar Ambulante* (PMA), Mobile Military Police, was established in February 1992 as a response to common crime in Guatemala, replacing the integrated services police unit *Sistema de Protección Cívica* (SIPROCI), System of Civil Protection. The police maintain that, in Guatemala City, *maras*, gangs of street youths, are responsible for high levels of crime.

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

- expressing concern at the reported ill-treatment and death threats directed against

Byron Geovanni Castillo and José Chicajua by members of the "Hunapú" urban security unit on 4 August 1992;
- asking for an immediate investigation into these incidents and urging that those found responsible be brought to justice;
- urging that immediate and adequate measures be taken to safeguard the physical integrity of all street children in Guatemala.

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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. Head of the National Police

Lic. José María Menéndez
Director General de la Policía Nacional
6 Avenida 13-71
Zona 1, Guatemala,
Guatemala

**Telegrams: Director General de la
Policía Nacional,
Guatemala, Guatemala**

Faxes: + 502 2 27521

**Salutation: Sr. Director General / Dear
Sir**

2. Minister of Interior:

Lic. Francisco Predomo
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. Human Rights Procurator:

Lic. Ramiro de León Carpio
Procurador de Derechos Humanos
Avenida Simeón Cañas 10-60 Zona 2,
Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Telegrams: Procurador de Derechos
Humanos, Avenida Simeón Cañas,
Guatemala, GUATEMALA**

Salutation: Sr. Procurador / Dear Sir

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Covenant House
Casa Alianza (Guatemala)
Apartado Postal 2704
Ciudad de Guatemala
GUATEMALA

Newspaper:

Diario Prensa Libre
13 Calle 9-31, 50 Nivel
Edificio Prensa Libre
Zona 1, Guatemala
GUATEMALA

Comission for the Rights of Child:

Lic. Joaquín Bámaca
Presidente

Comisión Pro-Niñez
Congreso de la República
7ta Avenida y 9a Calle
Zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala
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 24 September 1992.