

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 34/43/93

Distr: UA/SC

UA 215/93

"Disappearance"

28 June 1993

GUATEMALA:

Erwin ALVARADO ESTRADA, trader

Aurelio CABRERA MENDEZ, trader

Amnesty International is concerned about the "disappearance" of Erwin Alvarado Estrada and Aurelio Cabrera Méndez on 24 June 1993 in the municipality of Joyabaj, department of El Quiché, which is heavily patrolled by members of the Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil (PAC), Civil Defence Patrols.

According to reports, on 19 June 1993 the two men were attacked and threatened with being shot by the head of the PAC in that area. Later that day they were followed by the same man, who shot at their homes and at their vehicle. On the following day, while the two men were at the local police station asking for protection, another member of the PAC arrived at the police station and apparently said, in the presence of police officers, that "the job had not been done properly" and that he would do it himself. The police reportedly tried to detain him but he escaped.

Subsequently, on 24 June 1993 Erwin Alvarado Estrada and Aurelio Cabrera Méndez "disappeared" following a meeting with the local governor of the department of El Quiché.

Erwin Alvarado Estrada and Aurelio Cabrera Méndez had refused to join the PAC and had been actively trying to bring members of the PAC to trial for alleged violations. For this reason, it is feared that they may have been detained. However, this has not been acknowledged by the authorities and there is therefore concern for their safety.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Civil Defence Patrols (PAC) were created as a component of the military's counter-insurgency strategy in 1982. Although voluntary according to the Constitution, civil patrols are in effect compulsory. Those refusing to take part in them have been branded "guerrillas", and many have been subjected to human rights violations, including harassment and attacks, "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution.

On 6 June 1993 Ramiro de León Carpio, previously the Human Rights Procurator, was voted President by Congress, following his near-unanimous selection by Congress to serve out the remaining term of President Jorge Serrano Elías. Ex-president Serrano had been forced from office after trying to seize near-dictatorial powers.

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

- expressing concern about the "disappearance" of Erwin Alvarado Estrada and Aurelio Cabrera Méndez;
- asking for an immediate investigation into their whereabouts;
- urging that, if held in detention, they be humanely treated and granted access to a lawyer, doctor and relatives;
- urging that, if held in detention, they be promptly brought before a competent court or else released.

Page 2 of UA 215/93

APPEALS TO:

1) President of the Republic:

S.E. Ramiro de León Carpio
Presidente de la República de Guatemala

Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegrams: Presidente Serrano, Guatemala, Guatemala

Faxes: + 502 2 537472, + 502 2 519702

Telexes: 5331 CAPRES GU

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President

2) Minister of Interior:

Ministro de Gobernación

Ministerio de Gobernación

Despacho Ministerial, Of. No. 8

Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegrams: Ministro de Gobernación, Guatemala, Guatemala

Faxes: + 502 2 518105

**Telephone: + 502 2 21212, ext 500;
+ 502 2 518105-6 (direct)**

Telexes: 5085 MINGOB

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

3) Minister of Defence:

Gral. Roberto Perussina Rivera

Ministro de Defensa

Ministerio de Defensa

Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa, Guatemala, Guatemala

Faxes: + 502 2 537472

Telexes: 5361 COMGUA GU

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

1) Archbishop's Human Rights Office:

Oficina de Derechos Humanos del
Arzobispado de Guatemala (ODHAG)

Apartado Postal 723
Guatemala, Guatemala

1) Head of the Presidential Commission Coordinating the Policies of the Executive relating to Human Rights:

Sr. Bernardo Neumann
COPREDEH
15 Avenida 18-38, Zona 13
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 9 August 1993.