

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Threats/Intimidation

11 November 1991

GUATEMALA

Luisa RUIZ SAQUIC

plus 11 other villagers from Tunajá

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Luisa Ruiz Saquic, a member of the Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo por el Aparecimiento con Vida de Nuestros Familiares (GAM), Mutual Support Group for the Appearance of Our Relatives Alive, and 11 other villagers from Tunajá, Zacualpa, El Quiché department, after they were recently threatened by members of the local Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil (PAC), Civil Defence Patrols.

The threats against Luisa Ruiz Saquic and the 11 other villagers from Tunajá were reportedly made by several civil patrollers including Santos Coj Rodríguez. Luisa Ruiz Saquic and the other 11 villagers are witnesses in an ongoing trial taking place against Santos Coj Rodríguez and civil patroller Francisco Gómez (presently being sought by police) after the villagers from Tunajá accused them of being responsible for the torture and killings in 1982 and 1983 of their relatives. Eight victims were cited by relatives as being buried in a clandestine cemetery in Tunajá, after they were tortured and extrajudicially executed reportedly by the two civil patrollers along with members of the armed forces. The graves were uncovered in April 1989, after relatives denounced their existence. It is believed that there may be up to 50 bodies buried in the vicinity of Tunajá. Since the discovery of the clandestine cemetery, GAM has been calling for the perpetrators of these human rights violations to be brought to justice.

In June 1991 Santos Coj Rodríguez was apprehended and held in the jail in Santa Cruz del Quiché to stand trial for these killings. Since Luisa Ruiz Saquic and the other villagers denounced the existence of the clandestine cemetery in April 1989, they have been receiving death threats reportedly from Santos Coj Rodríguez and his relatives. In late October 1991 relatives went to the court in El Quiché to give evidence on the case and were told that they would not be permitted to give a declaration as the prisoner had escaped. GAM members have also said, that although reportedly imprisoned since June 1991, Santos Coj Rodríguez was seen on the street several times since that date. Although the present whereabouts of Santos Coj Rodríguez have been apparent to the Supreme Court of Justice and the Public Ministry, no effort has been made to arrest him.

Since the alleged escape of Santos Coj from prison, GAM members and witnesses in the trial have reported receiving renewed threats. Luisa Ruiz Saquic and another GAM member from Tunajá have reportedly sought refuge at the GAM office in Guatemala City. On 7 November GAM reported that six armed men stood outside the GAM office and showed their weapons. They then left. Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of GAM members from Tunajá.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

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 what appears to be a deterioration in the human rights situation in the country in past months, including an increased number of killings, death threats, torture and "disappearances". As in past years, the choice of victim and the manner in which the abuses have been carried out suggest the involvement of members of the official security forces.

Tens of thousands of people have been victims of human rights violations such as forced "disappearances", torture and extrajudicial executions in Guatemala over the past 30 years.

Several thousands of them, particularly indigenous peasants, were clandestinely buried in secret graves in the countryside, after they had been abducted or killed in the early 1980s, in the course of counterinsurgency operations led by the military government of the day. (See Guatemala: Lack of investigations into past human rights abuses: clandestine cemeteries, AI Index: AMR 34/10/91 of March 1991).

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters (in Spanish if possible):**

- expressing concern at the recent death threats made against Luisa Ruiz Saquic, and other residents from Tunajá;
- asking that these incidents be investigated and that the results be made public;
- asking that those found to be responsible be brought to justice;
- urging the government to take immediate steps to ensure the security of Luisa Ruiz Saquic and the other residents from Tunajá.

**APPEALS TO:**

1) President

S.E. Jorge Serrano Elías **Excelentísimo**  
 Presidente de la **Sr. Presidente**  
 República de Guatemala **Dear President**

Palacio Nacional

Guatemala, Guatemala

**Telegrams: Presidente Serrano, Guatemala, Guatemala**

**Telexes: 5331 CAPRES GU**

**Faxes: + 502 2 537472, + 502 2 519702**

2) Minister of the Interior

Lic. Fernando Hurtado Prem **Señor**  
 Ministro de Gobernación **Ministro**  
 Despacho Ministerial **Dear Minister**

Oficina No. 8, Primer Nivel

Palacio Nacional

Guatemala, Guatemala

**Telegrams: Ministro Gobernación, Guatemala, Guatemala**

**Telexes: 5085 MINGOB GU**

**Faxes: + 502 2 518105**

**COPIES TO:**

Dr. Edmundo Vásquez Martínez

Presidente de la Corte

Suprema de Justicia

Centro Cívico

21a Calle y 7a Avenida

Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Lic. Ramiro de León Carpio

Procurador de Derechos Humanos

Avenida Simeón Cañas 10-61

3) Minister of Defence

Gral. Luis Francisco **Señor Ministro**  
 Mendoza García **Dear Minister**

Ministro de Defensa

Ministerio de Defensa

Palacio Nacional

Guatemala, Guatemala

**Telegrams: Ministro Defensa Mendoza, Guatemala, Guatemala**

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4) Attorney General

Señor Acisclo Valladares **Señor Procurador**  
 Procurador General de la Nación **General**

Procuraduría General

de la Nación

18 Calle 10-36

Zona 1, Guatemala, Guatemala

**Telegrams: Procurador General, Guatemala, Guatemala**

Zona 2, Guatemala, Guatemala

Lic Jose Manuel Noriega  
Juez Primero de Primera Instancia  
Juzgado Primero de Primera Instancia  
2 Calle y 1 Avenida  
Edificio Tribunales Zona 1  
Santa Cruz del Quiché  
El Quiché, Guatemala

Señores

Grupo de Apoyo Mútuo (GAM)  
5a Avenida 9-11, Zona 12  
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 23 December 1991.