

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 34/07/96

UA 61/96

Fear for safety

1 March 1996

GUATEMALA Pastor Lucio Martínez, administrator of the Kaqchikel Presbyterian Church in Chimaltenango

Margarita Valiente, President of the Kaqchikel Presbyterian Church in Chimaltenango

~~Juan García, head of the Human Rights Committee of the Kaqchikel Presbyterian Church in Chimaltenango~~

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of Pastor Lucio Martínez and Margarita Valiente who received a death threat on 26 February 1996 and for Juan García who escaped an attempt to kidnap him on 22 February.

The written threat was left in the car belonging to Pastor Martínez outside the office of the presbytery in Chimaltenango and was signed by a group calling itself Jaguar of Justice. It said: "*... The time has come. You didn't obey the order to get out of the country. Now you have to face the consequences because we aren't playing. We warned you that with or without protection, you would fall into our hands. Wherever you go to complain, it won't affect us because you are in our hands. Señora Valiente thinks she is so brave but she won't be once she is in our hands and the sorrow of her followers in the villages will be great. So everything will end. We have warned you a third time. The third time is the last. Sincerely, Jaguar of Justice*". Lucio Martínez has also reportedly been followed by unknown persons and has received anonymous phonecalls.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Threats against Pastor Martínez were first reported in July 1995, a month after the discovery in an unmarked grave of the body of evangelical pastor, Manuel Saquic Vásquez, human rights activist and Coordinator of the Human Rights Committee (*Comité de Derechos Humanos*) of the Kaqchikel Presbyterian Church in Panabajal. (See UA 197/95, AMR 34/21/95 issued on 11 August 1995). The threats, signed by the Jaguar of Justice, were also directed at other members of the church including the General Secretary of the Conference of Protestant Churches, Rev. Vitalino Similox. The threats warned them against pursuing their investigations into Manuel Saquic's death. Members of Manuel Saquic's family and colleagues were also reported to have received death threats.

National and international non-governmental organizations and church leaders have been particularly critical of the failure of the authorities to arrest a former military commissioner and his two sons, both army security agents, believed to be responsible for the deaths of Manuel Saquic and Pascual Serech, founder of the Committee, murdered in August 1994. Although an arrest warrant has apparently been issued against the former military commissioner, it has yet to be enforced. The director of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights in Guatemala, MINUGUA, described the murder of Manuel Saquic as having very grave implications for the respect of human rights, saying that the killing was "*designed to intimidate organizations and persons who work in defence of those rights.*" ("*un crimen destinado a amedrentar a entidades y personas que trabajan en la defensa de dichos derechos*"). Amnesty International is seriously concerned at the alarming level of threats and attacks that continue to be reported against human rights defenders and at the failure of the authorities to bring those responsible to justice.

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

- expressing serious concern at continuing threats against Pastor Martínez and Margarita Valiente and the attempted abduction of Juan García;
- calling on the authorities to take immediate steps to guarantee their physical safety;
- urging the authorities to bring those responsible for these latest incidents and for the murders of Manuel Saquic and Pascual Serech to justice without further delay;

APPEALS TO:

1) President of the Republic:

S.E. Álvaro Arzú Irigoyen
Presidente de la República de Guatemala
Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Telegrams: Presidente Arzú Irigoyen, Guatemala, Guatemala
Faxes: +502 2 515 667
Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President

2) Minister of Interior:

Lic. Rodolfo Mendoza
Ministro de Gobernación,
Ministerio de Gobernación
Despacho Ministerial, Of. No. 8
Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Telegrams: Ministro de Gobernación, Guatemala, Guatemala
Faxes: + 502 2 537 472
Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

3) Minister of Defence

Gral. Julio Arnoldo Balconi Turcios
Ministro de Defensa
Ministerio de Defensa
Palacio Nacional
Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa, Guatemala, Guatemala
Faxes: + 502 2 515368
Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Fiscal General

Lic. Ramses Cuestas Gómez
Fiscal General de la Nación
Ministerio Público, 18 Calle 10-36, Zona 1
Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Faxes: +502 2 537 554 / 530 482

Human Rights Procurator

Lic. Jorge García Laguardia
Procurador de los Derechos Humanos
12 Avenida 12-72, Zona 1,
Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Conference of Protestant Churches in Guatemala

Conferencia de Iglesias Evangélicas de Guatemala
7A Avenida 1-11, Zona 2, 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 20 April 1996.