

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/death threats

18 March 2005

GUATEMALA

Marielos Monzón (f), journalist
Gabriel Mazzarovich (m), journalist

Journalists Marielos Monzón and Gabriel Mazzarovich have been subjected to death threats and intimidation, in what appears to be an effort to force them to stop reporting on demonstrations by groups including farmers, indigenous communities and teachers, who say the recently ratified Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) will destroy their livelihood. The police and army are alleged to have used excessive force in response to the demonstrations. Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the journalists' safety.

At 12:50pm on 17 March, Marielos Monzón received three consecutive phone calls on her mobile phone, but nobody spoke when she answered. The calls appeared to have been made from her own house, but when she phoned home her family said nobody had called her. Minutes later she received another phone call, also supposedly from her house, and this time a man apparently said, "*deja de defender a esos indios hediondos hija de puta o te vamos a matar*", "Stop defending those stinking Indians you bitch or we will kill you."

A few minutes later she received another phone call, this time from the Embassy of Uruguay, asking for confirmation that Gabriel Mazzarovich, who is a Uruguayan citizen, had died. Two Uruguayan newspapers had apparently reported his death. The news was unfounded, and Amnesty International believes the stories were placed in the newspapers to intimidate Gabriel Mazzarovich. Marielos Monzón and Gabriel Mazzarovich are colleagues on the radio program "*Buenos días con Marielos Monzón*", "Good morning with Marielos Monzón", broadcast on Radio Universidad station, which is based in Guatemala City.

Radio Universidad had recently broadcast two special programs on the violence which took place during demonstration against CAFTA. Protesters were allegedly violently repressed by the units of the police and the army during demonstrations in the municipality of Colotenango, department of Huehuetanango, in the northeast of the country, and the capital, Guatemala City. At least one protester was killed and approximately 10 injured. Amnesty International is concerned that the army has been repeatedly used in internal security during the government of President Berger. Under the Peace Accords signed in 1996 that put an end to 36 years of internal conflict, the army should only be responsible for the exterior defence of the country.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

CAFTA was signed by the governments of Guatemala, other Central American countries, the Dominican Republic and the USA in May 2004. Among other things the protestors allege it will destroy local agriculture and restrict local production of medicines, while allowing US multinationals increased access to Guatemalan markets. Despite nationwide protests against CAFTA on 14 March, the following day President Oscar Berger signed the accord into law.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Marielos Monzón and Gabriel Mazzorovich;
- calling on the authorities to take immediate measures, in accordance with the journalists' own wishes, to guarantee their safety;
- calling for an immediate and thorough investigation into the death threats and other harassment of Marielos Monzón and Gabriel Mazzorovich, with the results be made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- asking the authorities to carry out a full, prompt and impartial investigation into all the reports of human rights violations committed during the demonstrations against CAFTA, regardless of who is accused, to publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- reminding the authorities that under to the 1996 Peace Accords the role of the army should only be the exterior defence of the country.

APPEALS TO:

President

Presidente de la República de Guatemala.

Licenciado Oscar Berger Perdomo

Casa Presidencial, 6 a. Avenida, 4-18 zona 1. Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: +502 2221 4423 / 2239-0090

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Berger

Minister of the Interior

Ministro de Gobernación

Carlos Vielman

6a.Avenida 4-64, zona 4, nivel 3.Ciudad de Guatemala. GUATEMALA

Fax: +502 2362-02 37

Email: gobernación@mingob.gob.gt

Salutation: Señor Ministro/ Dear Minister

Attorney General

Fiscal General de la República y jefe del Ministerio Público

Juan Luis Florido, 8a. Avenida 10-67, Zona 1, Antiguo Edificio del Banco de los Trabajadores,

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: + 502 2251 2218

Salutation: Estimado Fiscal General/Dear Sir

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Procurator

Procurador de los Derechos Humanos, Dr. Sergio Fernando Morales Alvarado

Procuraduría de los Derechos Humanos (PDH)

12 Avenida 12-72, zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax: +502 7775 5476 (if voice answers, say "el tono de fax, por favor")

Email: opdhg@inteln.net.gt

Offices of the program "Good Morning with Marielos Monzón"

Oficinas del Programa "Buenos días con Marielos Monzón"

19 calle 2-42, zona 14, casa 8

Guatemala City, Guatemala

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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 30 April 2005.