

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety

30 May 2000

GUATEMALA

Human Rights groups and journalists

Human rights activists and journalists have been harassed and intimidated, and several have received death threats, since the start of legal proceedings against Guatemala's former presidents and dictators.

In December 1999 Nobel laureate Rigoberta Menchú filed allegations of genocide against eight of Guatemala's former dictators, presidents and ministers in a court in Spain. On 27 March a Spanish judge ruled that the Spanish courts should investigate the allegations. Among those named on the writ is the current leader of the Congress, Efraín Ríos Montt.

Since then Rigoberta Menchú and her colleagues at the *Fundación Rigoberta Menchú* (Rigoberta Menchú Foundation) have received death threats. They have been followed by cars, and their home telephones appear to have been tapped.

A number of other NGOs whose members and staff have also reported recent threats, including and *Coordinadora Nacional de Viudas de Guatemala* (CONAVIGUA, the National Coordinator of Guatemala's Widows) have since joined the Menchú Foundation writ.

Members of the *Comité de Unidad Campesina* (Peasants' Unity Committee), which works on behalf of indigenous people, have also received death threats.

A number of journalists have also reportedly received faxed or telephoned death threats in the past few weeks, and have been followed by suspicious cars with tinted windows. Among them are Eduardo Pinto, from the newspaper *Nuestro Diario*, Sergio Méndez from *Guatemala Flash* and Miguel Angel Albizures from *El Periódico*. Albizures is a prominent member of the *Alianza contra la Impunidad*, (Alliance against Impunity). The intimidation of these three began after they published a research paper on the existence of a clandestine intelligence service whose existence was denied by the government.

Amnesty international fears that all these acts are part of a strategy to create an atmosphere of insecurity and terror among the people who campaign for the defence of human rights in Guatemala.

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

- calling on the authorities to investigate fully recent death threats and harassment of the Guatemalan human rights NGOs and journalists named above;
- urging the authorities to take immediate and effective measures to ensure their safety;
- expressing concern for the safety of all those involved in efforts to protect human rights and combat impunity.

APPEALS TO:

1) President

Lic. Alfonso Portillo Cabrera, Presidente de la República de Guatemala
Palacio Nacional, 6^a Calle, entre 6^a y 7^a Avenida, Zona 1
Ciudad de Guatemala , GUATEMALA

Telegrams: Presidente, Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax: + 502 221 4425

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/ Your Excellency

2) Minister of the Interior

Lic. Guillermo Ruiz Wong
6a Avenida 4-64, Zona 4
Ciudad de Guatemala , GUATEMALA

Fax: +502 362 0239/ 362 0237

Salutation: Señor Ministro/Dear Minister

3) Minister of Defence

Col. Juan de Dios Estrada V.
Antigua Escuela Politecnica
Avenida Reforma 1-45, Zona 10
Ciudad de Guatemala , GUATEMALA

Fax: + 502 360 9007/360 9909

Salutation: Señor Ministro/Dear Minister

Attorney General

Lic. Adolfo González Rodas, Fiscal General de la República
Ministerio Público, 6a Avenida 3-11, Zona 4
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax: + 502 362 7223/331 5549

Salutation: Señor Fiscal/ Dear Attorney General

COPIES TO:

Human rights organisation

Centro para la Acción Legal en Derechos Humanos (CALDH)
9ª Av. 2-59, Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: + 502 221 1323/1268/1286 / 232 3821

CONAVIGUA

Coordinadora Nacional de Viudas
de Guatemala (CONAVIGUA)
8a. Avenida 2-29, Zona 1,
Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: + 502 232 5642

E-mail: conavigua@intelnet.net.gt

Newspaper

Diario El Periódico

15 Ave 24-51, Zona 13

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: +502 332 9761

E-mail: elperio@gold.guate.net/periodic@gold.guate.net

Newspaper

Diario "Prensa Libre"

13 Calle 9-31, Zona 1,

Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Tel/Fax: + 502 230 1384

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 12 July 2000.