

PUBLIC

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14 April 2003

UA 100/03

Fear for safety/death threats

GUATEMALA

**Manuel de Jesús Barquín Durán (m), Special Prosecutor for the *Ministerio Público*, Guatemalan Public Prosecutors Office**

**Injured: José Alfredo González Méndez (m)**

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Manuel de Jesús Barquín Durán, a Special Prosecutor for the *Ministerio Público* (MP), Guatemalan Public Prosecutors Office, after an attempt was made on his life and his bodyguard seriously injured.

At 1pm on 10 April, Manuel de Jesús Barquín Durán had stopped at a petrol station in Santa Cruz, Zacapa department, approximately 125 km from the capital Guatemala City, when a number of unidentified men shot at his pick-up truck. The men reportedly fired shots from several AK-47 rifles from another car before driving off. Although Manuel de Jesús Barquín Durán had got out of the truck several minutes before the attack, his bodyguard, José Alfredo González Méndez, was seriously wounded. Their pick-up truck was left with 37 bullet-holes. Manuel de Jesús Barquín Durán reports that he had received death threats for two weeks leading up to the incident.

Manuel de Jesús Barquín Durán is currently working on three delicate legal cases. At least one of these cases involves local officials from the department of Izabal. The first of these cases concerns the killing of journalist Jorge Mynor Alegría in the town of Puerto Barrios, Department of Izabal, on 5 September 2001 (see UA 225/01, 7 September 2001, AMR 34/36/2001). Jorge Alegría had denounced alleged corruption by local officials, including the ex-Mayor of Puerto Barrios, Mario Chigua. According to Manuel de Jesús Barquín Durán, the case has moved forward considerably recently and was approaching a critical stage. The second important legal case was that of the killing of environmentalists Erwin Ochoa and Julio Armando Ramírez, from the *Consejo Nacional de Areas Protegidas* (CONAP), the National Council for Protected Areas on 29 February 2000 in Izabal. The principal suspect in the Jorge Alegría case, Jairo Humberto Gómez Sandoval, is also suspected of involvement in this second case. Manuel de Jesús Barquín Durán was also working on the case of the killing of three youths in December 2000 in Puerto Barrios, Izabal.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Manuel de Jesús Barquín Durán, Special Prosecutor for the *Ministerio Público*, after an attempt was made on his life on 10 April;
- urging the authorities to offer immediate protection and to express public political support to Manuel de Jesús Barquín Durán;
- calling on the authorities to carry out an immediate, exhaustive and impartial investigation into the shooting of his vehicle and his bodyguard, bringing those responsible to justice and making the results public;
- pointing out that failure to investigate this grave incident can only be seen by the international community as evidence of the Guatemalan authorities' unwillingness or inability to deliver on their frequently repeated promises to the international community to protect members of the judiciary and human rights defenders.

**APPEALS TO:**

President of the Republic of Guatemala  
Lic. Alfonso Portillo Cabrera

Presidente de la República de Guatemala  
6a. Avenida "A" 4-41, Zona 1  
Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Fax: + 502 238 3579**

**Salutation: Dear Mr President/Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente**

Attorney General

Lic. Carlos David de León Argueta  
Fiscal General de la República  
Fiscalía General del Ministerio Público  
8a. Avenida 10-57, Tercer nivel, Zona 1  
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

**Fax: + 502 221 2718**

**Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Senor Fiscal General**

Secretary of Strategic Analysis

Lic. Arturo Montenegro  
Secretario de Análisis Estratégico  
Secretaría de Análisis Estratégico  
6a Avenida 'A' 3-53, Zona 1  
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Fax: + 502 232 2886**

**Salutation: Dear Secretary/Señor Secretario**

Minister of the Interior

Lic. Adolfo Reyes Calderón  
Ministro de Gobernación  
Ministerio de Gobernación  
6ª Avenida 4-64, Zona 4  
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

**Fax: + 502 362 0239 / 362 0237**

**Salutation: Dear Minister/Señor Ministro**

Director General of the National Civil Police

Comisario General Raul Arquimedes Manchame Leiva  
Director General de la Policía Nacional Civil  
6a Avenida 13-71, Zona 1  
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

**Fax: + 502 251 9382**

**Salutation: Dear Director/Señor Director**

**COPIES TO:**

Human Rights Procurator

Lic. Sergio Morales  
Procuraduría de los Derechos Humanos  
12 Avenida 12-72, Zona 1  
Ciudad de Guatemala 01001, Guatemala

**Fax: + 502 238 1734/230 0874/76/77/78 (if someone answers, please say "fax, por favor")**

Newspaper

Diario Prensa Libre  
13 Calle 9-31, Zona I  
Ciudad de Guatemala 01001, 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 26 May 2003.