

UA 137/02

Fear for

**GUATEMALA** Jesus Tecú Osorio (m)]  
Carlos Chen Osorio (m)] human rights defenders  
Pedrina Burrero Lopez (f) ]  
Juan de Dios García Xajil (m)]

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The four people named above work for a non-governmental organisation that is exhuming the clandestine mass graves of people massacred by the army during Guatemala's civil conflict in an area in Baja Verapaz Department inhabited by the Maya-Achí indigenous people. All have been receiving anonymous death threats for some time, but these have suddenly increased, and Amnesty International believes their lives are in danger.

All four work for the *Asociación para el Desarrollo Integral de las Víctimas de la Violencia en las Verapaces Maya Achí* (ADIVIMA), Association for the Integral Development of Victims of Violence in the Verapaces Maya Achí. Two of those threatened, Jesus Tecú Osorio and Carlos Chen Osorio, are also key witnesses in the CALDH (The Legal Centre for Action in Human Rights) suit for genocide against officials of the administrations of General Romero Lucas García and Efraín Ríos Montt, the latter now President of the Guatemalan Congress.

Anonymous threats to the four have been made to the ADIVIMA office, to their homes and mobile phones. The caller threatens to kill them if they continue with their work. Juan de Dios García Xajil was told for example, "te voy a matar" (I'm going to kill you) and "te conozco" (I know you), or has had callers simply hang up when he answers. Carlos Chen was told he will be killed unless he stopped pressing for exhumations. On 1 May Pedrina Burrero Lopez received a call in which a funeral march was played. She was asked if she had stopped working for ADIVIMA: if not, the caller said, "punto y aparte" (that's the end of the story). In addition, shots were fired opposite Carlos Chen's home on 1 April, and close to Pedrina Burrero Lopez's home on 2 May.

ADIVIMA has carried out 19 exhumations of clandestine graves in and around the Rabinal municipality, finding remains of 706 people. They estimate a further 61 clandestine cemeteries in the Rabinal area alone.

All four victims have been closely associated with these exhumations. ADIVIMA fears the threats are intended to intimidate them, to stop the exhumations and their efforts to bring those responsible for the massacres to justice. The threats have been reported to the Public Prosecutor's Office in Salamá, Baja Verapaz, which has been asked to investigate.

This month ADIVIMA is planning two further exhumations in the Vega Santo community, where they expect to find some 20 remains. They also plan exhumations in an education centre in Rabinal, where witness testimony indicates up to 800 massacre victims are buried.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

ADIVIMA has experienced death threats and intimidation since its foundation in 1994, but threats have intensified alarmingly since February this year, particularly since 20 April. On 25 February, ADIVIMA demanded that the military detachment in Rabinal be permanently withdrawn, in a written submission to the local office of the Human Rights Procurator. The day before presenting the demand, ADIVIMA members began receiving the threatening calls.

Guatemalan human rights defenders have been experiencing a heightened wave of abuses for almost two years. Many have been threatened, harassed, and intimidated for their efforts to investigate past human rights violations and to bring those responsible to justice. Threats to the *Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala* (FAFG), which gives technical support for the exhumations carried out by ADIVIMA, have also increased over recent months (see UA 68/02, AMR 34/014/2002, 5 March 2002 and follow-up, AMR 34/25/2002, 13 March 2002).

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

- calling on the authorities to guarantee the safety of Jesus Tecú Osorio, Carlos Chen Osorio, Pedrina Burrero Lopez, Juan de Dios García Xajil and other ADIVIMA workers, and all those involved in legitimate human rights work;
- urging them to immediately investigate all the reported threats against the four ADIVIMA workers, making the results public and bringing those responsible to justice;
- pointing out that the Guatemalan government is obliged to support the work of human rights defenders, referring to the principles in the resolution "Human Rights Defenders in the Americas" supported by Guatemala and adopted by the General Assembly of the Organization of the American States, in Guatemala, in June 1999.

**APPEALS TO:**

Vice-president of the Republic of Guatemala

Lic. Juan Francisco Reyes López

6<sup>a</sup> Avenida 'A' 4-18

Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Telegram: Vicepresidente de la República, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala**

**Fax: + 502 239 0090 (please keep trying this number)**

**Salutation: Dear vice-president/Señor Vicepresidente**

Minister of the Interior

Eduardo Arévalo Lacs

Ministro de Gobernación

Ministerio de Gobernación

6<sup>a</sup> Avenida 4-64, Zona 4

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

**Telegram: Ministro de Gobernación, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala**

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

**Salutation: Dear Minister/Señor Ministro**

Departmental Police

Jefe Comisario 52 David Rodriguez Hernandez,

Policía Nacional Civil

Barrio el Centro

Salamá

Baja Verapaz

**Fax: + 502 9400 168**

**Salutation: Estimado Señor Jefe/Dear Sir**

Public Prosecutors Office

Fiscal Distrital Nicolaz García Fuentes

Ministerio Público

1 Calle, 3-74 Zona 2,

Barrio San José

Salamá  
Baja Verapaz  
**Fax: + 502 940 2325 (please keep trying)**  
**Salutation: Estimado Señor/Dear Sir**

**COPIES TO:**

ADIVIMA

Asociación para el Desarrollo Integral de las Víctimas de Violencia en las Verapaces, Maya Achí  
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**Tel/fax: + 502 221 2521 (if a voice answers, say, "fax por favor")**

and to diplomatic representatives of Guatemala accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.**