

PUBLIC

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Death threats/ Intimidation

28 July 2005

GUATEMALA Luis Ernesto Morales Gálvez (m), aged 41]
Edgar Vinicio Ordóñez García (m), aged 43] Leading members of the
Luis Fernando Sirin Aroche (m), aged 30] *Sindicato de Trabajadores del Crédito*

Efraín López Uiché (m), aged 51] *Hipotecario Nacional (STCHN)*,
José Douglas Asencio (m), aged 37] *Worker's Union of the Crédito*
Elio Santiago Monroy López (m), aged 28] *Hipotecario Nacional*
Danilo Enrique Chea Herrera (m), aged 42]
Manuel Francisco Arias Virula (m), aged 41]
Members of the *Unión Sindical de Trabajadores de Guatemala (UNSI TRAGUA)*,
Labour Union of Guatemalan Workers

The eight trade union leaders named above have received death threats which they believe to be related to a long-standing industrial dispute. Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of the members of the *Sindicato de Trabajadores del Crédito Hipotecario Nacional (STCHN)*, Worker's Union of the National Mortgage Bank and members of *Unión Sindical de Trabajadores de Guatemala (UNSI TRAGUA)*, Labour Union of Guatemalan Workers.

At approximately 7:30 am, on 25 July a funeral wreath was found hanging on a window at the offices of *UNSI TRAGUA* to which *STCHN* is affiliated. Two death notices were also found by the door.

The first death notice said "*Que descanse en Paz el STCHN*," "May *STCHN* rest in peace" and "*Que lastima perder a seudoririgentes hijos de puta*", "What a pity to lose pseudo-leaders sons of a bitches" and it went on to list the eight names above. The second death notice said "*Cerotes, mierdas, hijos de puta, adios, adios*," "Pieces of shit, scum, sons of a bitches, goodbye, goodbye" and "*año inolvidable destrucción de un sindicato beligerante 2005*," "2005 unforgettable year of the destruction of a belligerent trade union". The threats were reported to the Public Prosecutor's Office and to the Guatemalan Human Rights Ombudsman's Office. However, to Amnesty International's knowledge effective protective measures have yet to be implemented.

The death threats have their origins in a long-standing industrial dispute which began in 2002 when 170 members of *STCHN* were forced to take "voluntary redundancy" following the announcement of the privatisation of *Crédito Hipotecario Nacional*, which the union opposes. The *STCHN* has reported that due to pressure on its members, 240 have left since 2002. Members of the Union also allege their phones have been blocked and the authorities have threatened to strip the trade union of its legal status.

On 22 July 2005, relations between the union and employers worsened. As union members met a representative of the Public Prosecutor's Office at the personnel offices of *Crédito Hipotecario Nacional*, to record their complaints of management actions against them, a senior manager reportedly insulted and threatened them saying that "*de aquí en adelante las cosas iban a cambiar*," "from here on things would change".

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

According to a Guatemalan non-governmental organization (NGO), the Human Rights Defenders Protection Unit of the National Movement for Human Rights, in 2004 there were 122 attacks against human rights

defenders, journalists, justice officials, trade unionists, religious officials community leaders and others. This increased to 130 cases in 2005.

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

- expressing grave concern for the safety of the eight trade union leaders named above who received death threats on 25 July 2005;
- urging the authorities to take immediate measures to protect them and other members of the *Sindicato de Trabajadores del Crédito Hipotecario Nacional (STCHN)* and the *Unión Sindical de Trabajadores de Guatemala (UNSITRAGUA)*, in line with their own wishes;
- calling for an immediate and thorough investigation into the death threats, for the results to be made public and those responsible brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

Attorney General

Fiscal General de la República y jefe del Ministerio Público, Juan Luis Florido, 8a. Avenida 10-67, Zona 1, Tercer Nivel .Antiguo Edificio del Banco de los Trabajadores, Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: +502 2251 2218

Salutation: Estimado Fiscal General/ Dear Sir

President of the Republic of Guatemala

Presidente de la República de Guatemala

Licenciado Oscar Berger Perdomo

Casa Presidencial, 6 a. Avenida, 4-41 zona 1. Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: +502 2239 0090

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/ Dear President Berger

COPIES TO:

National Movement for Human Rights

Movimiento Nacional por los Derechos Humanos

1ª Calle 0-11, zona 2, Colonia el Sauce, Guatemala

Tel/Fax: +502 2232 2651 (If someone answers say, "Tono de fax por favor")

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 8 September 2005.