

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety

21 December 200

GUATEMALA

**Sulma (legal name Kevin Josué Alegria Robles)
Other transvestite sex workers in Guatemala City
Other members of the *Organización de Apoyo a una Sexualidad Integral frente al SIDA*, Integral Sexuality AIDS Support Organisation (OASIS)**

Killed: Paulina, aged 22 (legal name Juan Pablo Méndez Cartagena), OASIS worker

Transvestite sex worker Sulma (legal name Kevin Robles) was shot in the head, allegedly by police, on 17 December, and remains in hospital in a serious condition. Another transvestite sex worker was killed in the attack. As Sulma witnessed the killing, the attackers are likely to attempt to silence her, but the authorities have not responded to requests to give her protection.

In the early hours of 17 December Sulma was in Zone One of Guatemala City, at the intersection of Fourth Avenue and 11th Street, with another transvestite sex worker, Paulina (legal name Juan Pablo Méndez Cartagena). Four men on motorbikes, who witnesses say were in police uniform, ordered them to stop, and then shot them. Paulina was hit twice in the head: she died minutes later. Sulma was hit three times but survived, and is in a serious but stable condition in hospital. She can only speak with difficulty, as one of the bullets reportedly smashed all her front teeth.

Several other transvestite sex workers witnessed the shooting, but are reportedly too scared to give testimony, fearing police reprisals. Police have reportedly been patrolling the streets near the shooting, in an apparent effort to intimidate the witnesses.

Since 1999 Sulma has been member of, and worked as a volunteer for, the Guatemala City-based *Organización de Apoyo a una Sexualidad Integral frente al SIDA*, Integral Sexuality AIDS Support Organisation (OASIS), which works on the prevention of HIV/AIDS and provides support to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people. Paulina had started paid work at OASIS in 2004 and since then had only occasionally had to make money as a sex worker.

OASIS has requested police protection for Sulma in hospital and the Human Rights Ombudsman's office has reportedly requested protection from the Interior Ministry. However, to date no protection has been provided.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The LGBT community in Guatemala regularly faces attacks and threats. Transvestite sex workers have been particularly vulnerable to attack. Police officers are often allegedly involved, raising fears of a clandestine policy of "social cleansing" within the police force, intended to drive sex workers off the streets. According to OASIS, this year seven transvestite sex workers have been killed on the streets of Guatemala City. Police have intimidated OASIS members many times in an attempt to stop them from carrying out their legitimate work of promoting the rights of Guatemala's LGBT community. In May 2003 two men attempted to kidnap OASIS director Jorge López, but he managed to escape from the car they had forced him into. OASIS has often publicly condemned the police for abuses against male, female and transvestite sex workers.

In June 2005 Guatemala's Evangelical and Catholic Churches proposed a law that would prevent same-sex couples from marrying. Since then, the number of threats and attacks against the LGBT community has increased. On 7 October transvestite sex worker Michelle (legal name Juan Manuel Villa Soto) died after she was so severely beaten that her head was crushed.

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

- expressing grave concern for the safety of Sulma, other sex workers and members of OASIS;
- calling on the authorities to take immediate measures to protect Sulma in accordance with her own wishes;
- calling on the authorities to carry out a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the attack against Sulma and Paulina, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate measures to end the intimidation of sex workers and LGBT people; and of those working with OASIS so that they can carry out their lawful activities without fear of intimidation.

APPEALS TO:

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

Salutation: Estimado Ministro/ Dear Minister

Attorney General

Fiscal General de la República y jefe del Ministerio Público (Public Prosecutor's Office)

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

Director General of the National Civil

Director General de la Policía Nacional Civil

Edwin Johann Spirisen

6ª Avenida 13-71, Zona 1, 1er nivel, Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: +502 2251 9382

Salutation: Estimado Director General/ Dear Sir

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Procurador

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 2424 1714

Salutation: Señor Procurador/ Dear Sir

OASIS (organización de apoyo a una sexualidad Integral Frente al Sida)

6ª AV. 1-63 Zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala 01001, GUATEMALA

Fax: +502 2221 2800 will get a recorded message, press 1 to get fax tone

e-mail: jlopezs@intelnet.net.gt

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 1 February 2006.