

PUBLIC

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11 August 2003

Further Information on UA 235/03 (AMR 34/048/2003, 07 August 2003) Fear for Safety

GUATEMALA Gustavo Meoño Brenner (m), Director of the *Fundación Rigoberta Menchú Tum* (FRMT), Rigoberta Menchú Tum Foundation
Other staff of the FRMT

New Names: Rigoberta Menchú Tum (f), founder and President of the FRMT
Francisco Menchú (m), her relative

Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Rigoberta Menchú Tum and her relative, Francisco Menchú, who works for the human rights group the *Fundación Rigoberta Menchú Tum* (FRMT), Rigoberta Menchú Tum Foundation, have been attacked and intimidated. Amnesty International is concerned for all staff at the FRMT.

On 10 August at 9.25pm, Francisco Menchú, who works as a security guard at the FRMT, was violently apprehended by two unknown men and forced at gunpoint into a white taxi in Zone 1 of the capital, Guatemala City. The men then beat him severely and demanded that Francisco Menchú hand over his gun, though he was not carrying it. The two men continued to attack him as the taxi drove through the city. The attack lasted for 10 minutes, until the men pushed Francisco Menchú out of the vehicle close to where he was apprehended and stole his identity papers, credit cards and firearm licence. Francisco Menchú's attackers were reportedly dressed in white shirts and black jackets, which are often worn by military intelligence agents.

Significantly, members of the FRMT were informed by different sources on 26 July that a death list targeting human rights defenders allegedly existed and that the people carrying out the actions against those on the list would be driving taxis.

After the attack, Francisco Menchú went home and telephoned the FRMT's director, Gustavo Meoño Brenner, to inform him about the incident. Later that night, between 9.55pm and 11.00pm, Francisco Menchú received two anonymous telephone calls. In the first, he could only hear a man laughing, while in the second, the caller threatened, "*dejen que estar chingando porque ya sabemos quienes son y dónde viven y pronto van a estar allí con ustedes*" ("stop causing trouble because we know who you are and where you live and soon we're going to be there with you").

This incident came two days after Rigoberta Menchú Tum, founder and President of the FRMT, was followed by an individual in a white pick-up truck as she drove to the FRMT's offices. The truck was parked outside of her home when she left at 7.00am, and had been reportedly seen previously outside the offices of the FRMT. Rigoberta Menchú Tum was followed until she arrived at the FRMT offices. During the journey, her pursuer tried unsuccessfully to crash into her vehicle.

On five occasions between 26 July and 7 August, the offices of the FRMT in Zone 1 of Guatemala City were observed and staff members harassed by several individuals, one of whom wore military-issue boots and was armed with a revolver. Earlier, on 29 April 2002, Guillermo Ovalle de León, an administrative worker for the FRMT and nephew of the Executive Director, was killed by gunmen in an alleged robbery in Zone 1 of Guatemala City. However, Guatemalan human rights groups were concerned that his killing may have been an act of intimidation and not a common crime (see UA 133/02, 1 May 2002, AMR 34/031/2002).

Recently, Rigoberta Menchú Tum has been a prominent member of the recently formed *Frente Cívico por la Democracia*, Civic Front for Democracy, a coalition of organizations and political parties established in the wake of recent political violence to ensure that the general elections scheduled for November 2003 are transparent and free. The violence was precipitated by groups of supporters of Congressional President Ríos Montt, who were rioting after a decision to suspend temporarily his candidacy for President. The Constitutional Court has since upheld its ruling for him to run as Presidential candidate.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Gustavo Meoño Brenner, Francisco Menchú, Rigoberta Menchú Tum and other staff at the FRMT;
- urging the authorities to carry out an immediate, impartial and exhaustive investigation into the kidnapping of Francisco Menchú and the other incidents of intimidation, for the results to be made public and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take all necessary measures to ensure the safety of FRMT staff members, in accordance with the wishes of the staff themselves;
- reminding the authorities of their obligations to human rights defenders, as laid out in the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted in December 1998, and in resolutions by the Organization of American States.

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, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax: + 502 238 3579

Salutation: Dear 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

E-mail: fiscaldeleon@mp.lex.gob.gt

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Senor Fiscal General

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 0237/ 0239

Salutation: Señor Ministro

Director General of the National Civil Police

Comisario General

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:

Rigoberta Menchú Tum Foundation

Fundación Rigoberta Menchú Tum
1ª. Calle 7-45, Edificio Soalsa, Zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala
Fax: + 502 254 4477

Newspaper

Diario Prensa Libre
13 Calle 9-31, Zona I, Ciudad de Guatemala 01001, Guatemala
Fax: + 502 251 8768/ 230 2193/ 230 2257

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 22 September 2003.