

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Further information on 379/93 (AMR 34/76/93, 27 October 1993) - and follow-up ((AMR 34/77/93, 20 October 1993) - Fear for safety

GUATEMALA: Francisco SOLBAL SANTAY)
Tiburcio HERNANDEZ HERNANDEZ) imprisoned
Noel Jesús de BETETA ALVAREZ) ex-soldiers
three others)
Jorge Guillermo LEMUS, common-law prisoner
NEW NAMES: Moises TUN TOC
Antonio CASTILLO MENDEZ
José MORALES CAMPOS
Oliverio ECHEVERRIA

Four prisoners in all have been found dead in the Zone 18 Preventivo Prison in Guatemala. Moises Tun Toc was found dead in his cell on 24 October. A few days earlier, Antonio Castillo Méndez and José Morales Campos were found strangled and Oliverio Echeverría hanged. The Guatemalan government originally claimed that all four had committed suicide, but a forensic inquiry undertaken by the Toxicology Department at the University of San Carlos (USAC) has established that they were murdered, apparently drugged with barbiturates. The judge handling the case has now stated that there is clear evidence of criminal involvement in the deaths, and two guards and a sub-director of the prison have been jailed in connection with the deaths.

Human rights groups in Guatemala say the four were murdered as part of a campaign of intimidation intended to prevent a number of other Guatemalan prisoners from revealing information about military responsibility for up to fifty "death squad" killings. These prisoners had been willing to cite the names of officials who allegedly ordered the "death squad" killings in which they had participated, but then retracted their testimonies, apparently after threats from the army high command. One of the prisoners, Jorge Lemus, a common law detainee, has been moved to Pavon prison, where he believes his life to be in grave danger. Francisco Solbal Santay, Tiburcio Hernández Hernández, Noel Jesús de Beteta Alvarez and three other former soldiers are still held in the Preventivo Prison where they were transferred after their recapture following a prison escape in September in which the murdered prisoners had also participated. The four murdered prisoners were also reportedly imprisoned on car theft or drugs charges, as was Jorge Lemus, and it is believed all, including Lemus, knew of military involvement in car theft and drug rings.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters in Spanish, English or your own language:

- press for further inquiries into the circumstances of the deaths of Moises Tun Toc, Antonio Castillo Méndez, José Morales Campos and Oliverio Echeverría, for the findings to be made public, and that those who both ordered and carried out the killings be brought to justice;

-continue to urge that Francisco Solbal Santay, Tiburcio Hernández Hernández and Jorge Lemus (and other former soldiers like Noel de Jesús Beteta, who may also wish to testify concerning human rights violations carried out by the military) are protected and their testimonies be taken in this virtually unique possibility in Guatemala to identify perpetrators of human rights violations;

- reiterate that the actions suggested would be the only appropriate path for the government to follow, particularly given President de León's promises upon taking office that he would continue to work, as he had done as Human Rights Procurator, to ensure protection of the human rights of all Guatemalans, and that impunity for perpetrators of abuses would not be permitted.

APPEALS TO:

1) President of the Republic:

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Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente /Dear President

2) Minister of Interior:

Lic. Arnoldo Ortiz Moscoso
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Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

3) Minister of Defence:

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 Ministro de Defensa
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Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Attorney General:

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 18 C 10-36, Zona 1
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Archbishop's Human Rights Office

Oficina de Derechos Humanos del
 Arzobispado de Guatemala (ODHAG)
 Apartado Postal 723
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Departamento de Toxicología

Facultad de Ciencias Químicas y Farmacia
 Universidad de San Carlos
 3 Calle, 6-47, Zona 1,

Guatemala, GUATEMALA

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 December 1993.