

URGENT ACTION

GUATEMALAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS AT RISK

Three female members of staff at UDEFEGUA, a human rights NGO based in Guatemala's capital, Guatemala City, have been victim to a series of attacks, intimidation and threats. Their lives are in danger.

On the morning of 5 March, two unidentified men broke into the house of **Erenia Vanegas**, a UDEFEGUA staff member, while she and her family were out. A neighbour reported seeing a black car with tinted windows park outside the house, and two men get out of the car. They broke into the house. When Erenia Vanegas and her family came home, they found that the cupboards in some of the bedrooms had been searched, as well as a box containing documents. The locks on front doors were broken, as was one of the windows. Erenia Vanegas reported that nothing, not even money left out on view in the house, had been stolen. She reported the break-in to police.

This is the latest in a series of incidents seemingly deliberately targeting UDEFEGUA staff. On 2 February, **Claudia Samayoa**, Coordinator of UDEFEGUA, noticed that her car bonnet was open and the battery had been tampered with. When she began driving, she realised that the pedals of the car were covered in oil, causing her foot to slip, and she briefly lost control of the car. Further investigation showed that the oil on the pedals was not any kind usually found in a car, and that Claudia Samayoa's car had no oil leaks. Claudia Samayoa believes that her car was sabotaged with the intention of causing an accident, and has reported this to police.

Between 30 April and 3 May 2009, Claudia Samayoa, Erenia Vanegas and a third staff member, **Luisa Pineda**, received more than 30 threats by text message to their mobile phones. These threats have been reported to police, but it is not known who is behind the threats or any of the recent incidents.

UDEFEGUA (La Unidad de Protección a Defensoras y Defensores de Derechos Humanos – Guatemala) (The unit for Protection of Human Rights Defenders – Guatemala) monitors, verifies and accompanies human rights defenders at risk in Guatemala. Members of staff of UDEFEGUA believed that the recent incidents are an attempt to intimidate them into discontinuing their work.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- calling for an independent, thorough and impartial investigation into the threats and acts of intimidation against members of UDEFEGUA, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging that the authorities take immediate steps to provide efficient, thorough protection to the members of staff of UDEFEGUA in accordance with their wishes;
- call on the authorities to approve and implement a protection programme for human rights defenders.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 21 APRIL 2010 TO:

Attorney General and Head of the Public Prosecutor's Office
Lic. José Amílcar Velásquez Zárate
Fiscal General de la República y Jefe del Ministerio Público
8ª Avenida 10-67, Zona 1, Antiguo Edificio del Banco de los Trabajadores, Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Fax: +502 2411 9124/+502 2411 9326

Salutation: Dear Attorney General / Estimado Sr. Fiscal General

Minister of the Interior/ Ministro de Gobernación:
Lic. Carlos Menocal
Ministro de Gobernación
6ª Avenida 13-71, Zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Fax: +502 2413 8658
Salutation: Dear Minister/ Estimado Sr. Ministro

And copies to:

UDEFEGUA
1 Calle 7-45 zona 1, Oficina 2-b, Ciudad de Guatemala GUATEMALA
Fax: +502 2254 5840
Email: udedefegua@yahoo.com, udedefegua@udedefegua.org

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of Guatemala accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Guatemalan government is yet to adopt and implement an effective protection programme for human rights defenders at risk. In early 2008, civil society organizations and state agencies presented the Minister of the Interior with a draft decree which is still to be approved.

UA: 54/10 Index:AMR 34/002/2010 Issue Date: 10 March 2010

