

URGENT ACTION

TWO JOURNALISTS THREATENED AND IN DANGER

At the end of October, two journalists were threatened for reporting on the activities and arrests of members of a local citizen security group in Panajachel, in the Sololá Department of Guatemala. They are in imminent danger.

On 24 October, members of a local citizen security group that functions independently of State security forces made threats against **Lucía Escobar** on a local cable TV channel, saying that she deserves to be left in a rubbish bin for making accusations about the group in a newspaper. ("merece mejor que la vayan a tirar a un basurero").

Lucía Escobar had written an article on 19 October alleging that crimes have been committed in the town by groups of masked men, including lynchings, torture, beatings, and the disappearance of a citizen of Panajachel. In the article she names the leaders of the local citizen security group and accuses them of controlling these groups of masked men. Between 30 October and 2 November, she reported receiving five intimidating text messages sent via an anonymous web-based service that were intended to implicate her in illegal activities with a local drug-trafficker.

On 31 October, two of the leaders of the local citizen security group were arrested. Another journalist, **Gustavo Girón**, reported on the arrest of the two men on a Guatemalan TV channel. Moments after the news programme was broadcast, he received a threatening phone call saying that he would regret making this report. ("te vas a arrepentir por haberte metido con nosotros"). Amnesty International believes his life is in danger.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to take immediate steps to provide full and appropriate protection to Lucía Escobar and Gustavo Girón in strict accordance with their wishes.
- Call on the authorities to conduct an independent, thorough and impartial investigation into the threats made against Lucía Escobar and Gustavo Girón, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- Call on the authorities to conduct an independent, thorough and impartial investigation into all allegations of lynchings, torture, beatings, and disappearances attributed to the local citizen security group.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 DECEMBER 2011 TO:

Special Prosecutor for Crimes against Journalists
 Lic. Marvin Cifuentes,
 Unidad Fiscal de Delitos en contra de Periodistas
 Ministerio Público
 7ª. Avenida 11-20 zona 1, segundo nivel
 Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala
 Fax: +502 2251 2746 (say "fax por favor")
Salutation: Dear Prosecuting Agent/Estimado Agente Fiscal

Minister of the Interior
 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:

Guatemalan NGO
 Unit for protection of human rights defenders (Unidad de protección a defensores y defensoras de derechos humanos, UDEFEGUA)
 1 Calle 7-45 zona 1, Oficina 2-b,
 Ciudad de Guatemala
 Guatemala
 Email: udefegua@yahoo.com

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Public security in Guatemala is a major human rights concern, with violent crime and gang violence widespread. According to the Guatemalan Human Rights Ombudsman's Office, 5,960 people were killed as the result of crime throughout 2010. Often there is an inadequate state response to crime and high levels of impunity result. Amnesty International has previously documented cases in which clandestine groups have operated with the knowledge and sometimes the involvement of current or former members of the security forces.

During 2010, human rights organizations documented 305 incidents of intimidation, threats and attacks against human rights defenders, including eight killings. The authorities failed to hold anybody to account for the vast majority of these and previous crimes.

Name: Lucía Escobar and Gustavo Girón
Gender m/f: Lucía Escobar (f); Gustavo Girón (m)

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