

Network of Concerned Historians				NCH
Campaigns				
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Names
2001		24	Guatemala	Matilde Leonor González Izas, historian

### *Announcement*

Amnesty International is issuing an urgent action for our Guatemalan colleague, historian Matilde Leonor Gonzalez Izas, who carries out research on the mechanisms used by the military to maintain local power and now lives in hiding. We hope that you can send the recommended urgent appeals immediately. Please remember to write in your professional capacity.

**URGENT ACTION APPEAL**—19 October 2001—UA 266/01—Threats and intimidation/Fear for safety

### **GUATEMALA: Matilde Leonor Gonzalez Izas** (female)

Amnesty International has grave concerns for the safety of Matilde Leonor Gonzalez Izas after receiving information that she has been kept under surveillance and has received a number of threatening telephone calls.

Matilde Leonor Gonzalez Izas is a historian working for Asociación para el Avance de las Ciencias Sociales (AVANCSO), Investigation Centre for the Advancement of Social Sciences. She has researched and published information on the new mechanisms used by the military to maintain local power in the San Bartolome Jocotenango in the department of EL Quiche. Her work has revealed the complicity of the military in the mob violence and lynchings that are taking place in communities throughout the country. Matilde Leonor Gonzalez Izas has also been subjected to threats and intimidations in 1998 and in 1999 as a result of her investigations.

On 2 October, a man entered Matilde Leonor Gonzalez Izas' house and stole her lap-top computer. It contained information on her research and that of another similar research project in San Idelfonso Ixtahuacan, Huhuetenango. On the same day, her neighbors noticed that her house was being watched by people in two different cars. The house was also being watched on 5 October, but this time the neighbors scared the culprits away. On 7 and 8 October, Matilde Leonor Gonzalez Izas was followed as she left her house. A day later, as she was driving, seven cars surrounded her and boxed her in, forcing her to take a

different route. When she saw an acquaintance in the street, she asked him to get in the car with her. A few hundred meters later, the other cars drove off.

Matilde Leonor Gonzalez Izas has since gone into hiding. Even there she began receiving strange phone calls, where nobody would speak on the other end of the phone when she answered. She also received threatening calls on her mobile phone.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

AVANSCO has been a target of human rights abuses in the past, most notably with the killing of the anthropologist Myrna Mack in 1990. Myrna Mack's investigations showed that the military was targeting civilian populations during the armed conflict.

## **RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:

urging the authorities to denounce the threats and intimidations against Ms.Gonzalez Izas;

urging the government to carry out a full investigation into these events in order to who planned and carried out the threats and intimidation;

urging the authorities to take all necessary measures to ensure the safety of Ms.Gonzalez Izas.

## **APPEALS TO**

Minister of the Interior:

Sr. Byron Barrientos,

Ministro de Gobernación, Ministerio de Gobernación,

6a Avenida 4-64, Zona 4, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Telegrams: Ministro de Gobernación, Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax: 011 502 362 0239/ 362 0237

Salutation: Dear Minister / Señor Ministro

Minister of Defense:

Gral. Eduardo Arevalo Lacs,

Ministro de Defensa Nacional, Ministerio de Defensa,  
Antigua Escuela Politecnica, Avenida Reforma 1-45, Zona 10, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala  
Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa Nacional, Guatemala, Guatemala  
Telefax: 011 502 360 9909  
Salutation: Dear Minister / Señor Ministro

Attorney General:

Lic. Adolfo Gonzalez Rodas,  
Fiscal General de la República, Ministerio Público,  
8a. Avenida 10-67 Zona 1, Tercer nivel, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala  
Telegrams: Fiscal General, Guatemala, Guatemala  
Fax: 011 502 221 2718 (directo)  
Salutation: Dear Attorney General / Señor Fiscal General

Minister of External Relations:

Lic. Gabriel Orellana,  
Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores,  
Avenida Reforma 4-47, Zona 10, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala,  
Telegrams: Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, Guatemala, Guatemala  
Fax: 011 502 331 7938/ 331 8410  
e-mail: mint@mieno.gt  
Salutation: Dear Minister / Señor Ministro

**COPIES TO:**

Asociación para el Avance de las Ciencias Sociales en Guatemala (AVANCSO)  
6a Ave. 2-30, Zona 1, Guatemala, Guatemala  
Fax: (502) 232 5841

El Periódico (newspaper)  
15 Ave 24-51, Zona 13, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala  
Fax: 011 502 332 9761  
E-mail: periodic@gold.guate.net

Ambassador Ariel Rivera Irias  
Embassy of Guatemala, 2220 R St. NW, Washington DC 20008,

Phone: 1 202 745 4952

Fax: 1 202 745 1908

Please send appeals immediately. Check with the Network of Concerned Historians if sending appeals after November 30, 2001.

Ensuring letter-writing actions are not disrupted by new security measures:

In the light of current security concerns, including concerns about anthrax being sent through the post to media and government addresses, authorities in the US and elsewhere will be implementing security procedures to ensure the safety of mail. Letters to government officials will be carefully scrutinized and this may mean a significant delay before they reach the recipients. This may have an impact on how we can best ensure that appeals on UA cases and other actions are delivered as quickly as possible.

Below are some simple suggestions for activists involved in sending appeals to minimize potential disruption and to ensure that our concerns reach the authorities as quickly as possible:

where possible consider using fax, e-mail etc or postcards, rather than sealed envelopes, to send appeal letters to authorities.

if letters are sent:

put a return address on the envelope (the letter should be sent from the same area);

provide a complete address and title and write clearly;

don't put lots of enclosures in envelopes;

don't seal envelopes with tape

Amnesty International is a worldwide grassroots movement that promotes and defends human rights.