

Network of Concerned Historians				NCH
Campaigns				
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Names
2002		26	Guatemala	Forensic anthropology foundations
	2002			<i>follow-up 1</i>

### *Announcement*

Amnesty International has further troubling news about the death threats against employees of several forensic anthropology teams in Guatemala. As we said before, these teams literally excavate past atrocities and are therefore of great concern to historians. We hope that you can send the recommended urgent appeals immediately. Please remember to write in your professional capacity.

### **URGENT ACTION APPEAL—13 March 2002**

Further information on UA 68/02 issued 5 March 2002

### **Death threats/fear for safety—GUATEMALA**

Mariana Valdizón (f)

Fernando Moscoso (m),

Fredy Peccerelli (m), Director of FAFG

Frederico Reyes (m)

Leonel Paíz (m)

Francisco de León (m)

José Samuel Suasnavar (m)

Guillermo Meza (m)

Claudia Rivera (f)

Raul García (m)

Miguel Morales (m)

All are forensic scientists, current or former employees of the Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala (FAFG; Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation), the Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala (ODHAG; Human Rights Office of the Archbishopric of Guatemala), and the Centro de Antropología Forense y Ciencias Aplicadas (CAFCA; Centre of Forensic Anthropology

and Applied Sciences). Several of those threatened have given key forensic testimony in proceedings against former government officials for past human rights violations.

Five of the 11 people who received death threats on 21 February received anonymous telephone death threats against themselves and their families on 7 March. Miguel Morales was held up at gunpoint on 6 March, by men who demanded his mobile telephone. This may be how the anonymous caller obtained the other scientists' numbers. Their phone lines appear to have been tapped.

Police protection was requested on their behalf by CALDH on 6 March and AI understands that 24-hour police protection is now in place. However, Amnesty International remains gravely concerned for their safety, given past incidents where people, also under police protection, have suffered renewed attacks (see UA 265/00, AMR 34/35/00, 5 September 2000).

Mariana Valdizón received an anonymous telephone call at 10.10 am, warning her that she should watch out for her daughter. About five minutes later Federico Reyes received a call from a man who laughed as he warned him that if he had not already organised his funeral, he should do so straight away. He immediately called FAFG director Fredy Peccerelli at the FAFG offices.

Minutes later, a caller to the FAFG offices asked to speak to Fredy Peccerelli. When told that Fredy could not come to the telephone, he told the receptionist to pass on the message that "el y los demás hijos de puta" (him and the rest of the bastards) should watch out, as "les vamos a matar pronto" (we are going to kill them soon). From the background noise the receptionist believed the call was made from the street, either from a public telephone or a mobile. That night, Fredy Peccerelli saw a green pick-up truck with tinted windows pass his house repeatedly.

A few minutes after the call to the FAFG office, Fernando Moscoso took a call from a man who warned him to make arrangements for his funeral. Fernando Moscoso has told the police the telephone number from which the call was made. At about the same time, an anonymous caller to the home of Francisco de León warned his wife that she should take care of her children, as they were very beautiful. Leonel Paíz has also reported that on 4 or 5 March, he had found a message on his answering machine in which funeral march music was played, which Paíz has interpreted as a death threat.

The fire at the church in Nebaj on 21 February is now known to have destroyed most of the documents stored there, which contained information on 35 massacres recorded by the Catholic church between 1980 and 1983 in Nebaj alone. The day before the fire, forensic scientists from the FAFG had removed human remains that had been stored at the church after they were exhumed from a mass grave in the small village of Xecot.

The people behind the threatening letter issued that day had clear links to the military during Guatemala's civil conflict. At one point the letter reads: "no hay responsables en la guerra y ustedes no son quien para juzgarnos" (in a war there are no guilty parties, and it is not your place to judge us.) It also directly attacked the role of exhumations in combating impunity: "no habrá procesos judiciales de ninguna exhumación hecha por ustedes hijos de puta, ni de ningún extranjero maldito; primero los matamos, cerote" (There will be no legal proceedings because of any exhumations done by you bastards or any damned foreigner. We will kill you first, you piece of shit.)

### **FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:

expressing grave concern for the safety of those named above;

calling on the authorities to guarantee the safety of the employees of FAFG, CAFCA, ODHAG and others involved in exhumations, as

well as their families;

urging the authorities to immediately investigate the reported threats against those named above and bring the perpetrators to justice.

### **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

Telegrams: Presidente de la Republica de Guatemala, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax: 011 502 239 0090 (please keep trying this number)

Email: mensajes@presidenteportillo.gob.gt

Salutation: Dear President/Señor Presidente

Minister of the Interior:

Eduardo Arevalo Lacs

Ministro de Gobernación

Ministerio de Gobernación

6a Avenida 4-64, Zona 4

Ciudad de Guatemala , GUATEMALA

Telegrams: Ministro de Gobernación, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax: 011 502 362 0239/ 362 0237

Email: monica24@inteln.net.gt

Salutation: Dear Minister/Señor Ministro

Peace Secretary (formally responsible for monitoring implementation of the peace accords):

Sr. Gabriel Aguilera

Secretario de la Paz

5a Calle 4-33, Zona 1

Edificio Rabi, 4 Nivel

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: 011 502 230 1731

Salutation: Dear Secretary/Señor Secretario

Servicio Medico Forense del Organismo Judicial (Forensic Medical Service):

Avenida del Cementerio 18-26, Zona 3

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: 011 502 230 4206 (if a voice answers, say “por favor, tono de fax”)

**COPIES TO:**

Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala (FAFG)

Avenida Simon Canas 10-64, Zona 2,

01002 Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: 011 502 254 0882/288 7297/ 288 7302 (if a voice answers, say “por favor, tono de fax”)

Newspaper:

Diario Prensa Libre

13 Calle 9-31, Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: 011 502 251 8768

Ambassador Ariel Rivera Irias

Embassy of Guatemala

2220 R St. NW  
Washington DC 20008  
Fax: 1 202 745 1908

Please send appeals immediately. Check with NCH if sending appeals after April 24, 2002.

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