

Network of Concerned Historians				NCH
Campaigns				
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Names
2003		31	Guatemala	Fredy Peccerelli, forensic anthropologist, a.o.

Announcement

Amnesty International reports once again about death threats against members of a Guatemalan forensic anthropology team. 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.

P.S.: For other NCH actions on Guatemala, see: NCH #13 (bishop Juan Gerardi); NCH #24 (historian Matilde Leonor González Izas); NCH #26 (forensic anthropologists). For other NCH actions on forensic anthropology, see NCH #29 (Argentinian archeology student Fernanda Sanssone). For more news on forensic anthropology and exhumations in other parts of the world, see the news circulars at the NCH website.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL URGENT ACTION APPEAL

08 May 2003--UA 127/03--Fear for Safety--GUATEMALA

Fredy Peccerelli (m)

Omar Bertoni Girón de León (m)

(Both members of the Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala (FAFG), Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation)

Bianka Irina Peccerelli Monterroso (f), student, sister of Fredy Peccerelli

Members of the Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala (FAFG), Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation, and their families have been intimidated and threatened in a number of incidents in the capital, Guatemala City. In the absence of any government exhumations program, FAFG is involved in exhuming the bodies of people massacred during the Guatemalan military's counter-insurgency campaign in the early 1980s.

On 29 April, the front door of FAFG member Fredy Peccerelli's house in Zone 11 of Guatemala City was shot at. Police later also discovered a bullet hole in his neighbor's house. No one was injured in the incident. On 28 April, Omar Bertoni Girón, also a member of FAFG, was followed and then robbed by two unknown men in Zone 12 of Guatemala City. The men took his mobile phone, threatening to kill him if he didn't give it to them. They then said to him “¿Vos trabajas en la Fundación, verdad? (“You work for the Foundation don't you?”). During the robbery, two cars followed Bertoni until a police car passed by and then the assailants and the cars left the scene.

On 3 April, two unidentified men were observed watching the family home of Bianka Peccerelli Monterroso, sister of Fredy Peccerelli and girlfriend of Omar Bertoni Girón, in Guatemala City. After some time, Bianka Peccerelli Monterroso's parents confronted the men and asked them if they were watching the house. The men replied that they were members of the police Servicio de Investigaciones Criminalística (SIC), Criminal Investigations Department, and were on a special mission. They said they were not watching the Monterroso family's house. However, the men did not show any official identification. They left after Bianka Peccerelli Monterroso's parents called the police. On the same day, at approximately 2pm, unidentified burglars broke into Fredy Peccerelli's house, stealing his passport and several important documents concerning the work of the FAFG.

Bianka Peccerelli Monterroso had also been targeted in two earlier incidents. On 6 March, at around 8:15pm, she was followed in her car through Guatemala City by two unidentified men in a blue Mitsubishi Colt. The men pursued her and when their car was close to hers, pointed a gun at her and threatened to kill her if she did not stop the car. However, she was able to escape unhurt. A further serious incident took place on 12 March at 9:15am, in the restaurant Máximo, located near the University of San Carlos in Zone 11 of Guatemala City. Three men entered the restaurant while Bianka Peccerelli Monterroso and her friends were eating. The men stared threateningly at Bianka Peccerelli Monterroso and as she and her friends left, one of them lifted his shirt to reveal a pistol. The women subsequently called the police, identifying one of the men as one of Bianka's pursuers on 6 March. However, the men remained in the restaurant and asked the staff personal questions about Bianka Peccerelli Monterroso, telling them they were going to kidnap her and her friends. The women later gave statements to the police.

All these incidents of threats and intimidation have been reported to the Ministerio Público (MP), Public Prosecutor's Office, and to La Misión de Verificación de las Naciones Unidas en Guatemala (Minugua), the United Nations Verification Mission to Guatemala, among other authorities. However, investigations into the incidents have not yet brought any results.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 21 February 2002, death threats were made against the employees of FAFG, as well as against the Centro de Antropología Forense y Ciencias Aplicada, (CAFCA), the Center of Forensic Anthropology and Applied Sciences (see UA 68/02, 5 March 2002 [or NCH #26 and NCH #26 (ii)]).

Since 1992, the Foundation has carried out 191 exhumations of more than two thousand victims of the armed conflict. Their work has enabled the collection of forensic evidence concerning the massacres, which has contributed to various lawsuits against the perpetrators.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:

expressing concern for the safety of FAFG members Fredy Peccerelli and Omar Bertoni Girón de León, and Fredy Peccerelli's sister Bianka Irina Peccerelli Monterroso, who have been intimidated and threatened in a number of recent incidents;

calling on the authorities to guarantee the safety of the employees of FAFG and their families;

urging the authorities to carry out an immediate, impartial and exhaustive investigation into the intimidation of Fredy Peccerelli, Omar Bertoni Girón de León and Bianka Irina Peccerelli Monterroso, to make public the results, and to bring those responsible to justice;

reminding the authorities of their obligation to fulfill the recommendations made by the Comisión de Esclarecimiento Histórico (CEH), Historical Clarification Commission, which identified exhumations as an important step towards justice and national reconciliation, and called for a government exhumation program.

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

Fax: 011 502 239 0090 (please keep trying)

Salutation: Dear President/Señor Presidente

Attorney General:

Lic. Carlos David de Leon Argueta

Fiscal General de la República

Fiscalía General del Ministerio Público

8a. Avenida 10-57, Tercer nivel, Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: 011 502 221 2718

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Senor Fiscal General

Minister of the Interior:

Lic. Adolfo Reyes Calderón

Ministro de Gobernación

Ministerio de Gobernación

6ª Avenida 4-64, Zona 4

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: 011 502 362 0239 / 362 0237

Salutation: Dear Minister/Señor Ministro

Director General of the National Civil Police:

Comisario General Raul Arquimedes Manchame Leiva

Director General de la Policía Nacional Civil

6a Avenida 13-71, Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: 011 502 251 9382

Salutation: Dear Director/Señor Director

COPIES TO:

Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation:

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 Antonio Arenales Forno

Embassy of Guatemala

2220 R St. NW

Washington DC 20008, USA

Fax: 1 202 745 1908

Please send appeals immediately. Check with the Network of Concerned Historians if sending appeals after 19 June 2003.