

Network of Concerned Historians				NCH
Campaigns				
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Names
2003		31	Guatemala	Fredy Peccerelli, forensic anthropologist, a.o.
	2006			<i>follow-up 2</i>
	2005			<i>follow-up 1</i>

Announcement

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) reports once again about death threats against members of a Guatemalan forensic anthropology team. These teams carry out excavations of mass graves to collect historical evidence about past atrocities and are therefore of great concern to historians. Please see the AAAS message below. We hope that you can send the recommended urgent appeals immediately. Please remember to write in your professional capacity.

P.S.: For a NCH case summary, see NCH #31 (ii). For other NCH actions on Guatemala, see: NCH #13, 24, 26. For other NCH actions on forensic anthropology, see NCH #29. For more news on forensic anthropology and exhumations in Guatemala and other parts of the world, see the news circulars at the NCH website.

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION NETWORK (AAASHRAN)

(Visit the AAASHRAN website to read this alert online and compose letters of appeal: <http://shr.aaas.org/aaashran>).

GUATEMALAN FORENSIC ANTHROPOLOGY FOUNDATION AGAIN FACING DEATH THREATS

13 January 2006--Case number: gu0207_for

ISSUES: Harassment or intimidation; Right to the exercise of one's profession

Previous Alerts: 21 March 2002 ; 16 May 2002 ; 9 May 2003 ; 14 September 2005

FACTS OF THE CASE

The Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation (FAFG), and in particular anthropologist Fredy Peccerelli, its executive director, and his family are once again facing death threats from unknown assailants thought to have been tied to the military during Guatemala's civil war.

On 9 January 2006, Fredy Peccerelli received a threatening text message on his mobile phone. The message demanded an end to exhumations and threatened to kill Fredy's brother Gianni. The message mentioned specific information about Gianni's new car that is missing its rear window, indicating that the family is being closely watched by the aggressors.

The next day, on 10 January 2006, Bianka Peccerelli, Fredy's sister and wife of Omar Giron Bertoni, the laboratory coordinator for FAFG, found an anonymous letter addressed to Omar, threatening her, Omar, and Fredy. The letter stated the sender's intention to torture and kill them.

Threats against Fredy and the foundation resumed in August 2005 after a two-year respite. The previous threats might have been related to the 2003 presidential elections. FAFG has been working to exhume the clandestine mass graves of people massacred during Guatemala's 35-year civil conflict.

Exhumations and the analysis of the human remains have played a critical role in providing forensic investigation teams with evidence to scientifically document massacres perpetrated by the Guatemalan military and the paramilitary groups related to the military. Many of those responsible for human rights violations continue to hold positions in the military, government and society.

Since 1992, FAFG has carried out over 200 exhumations of mass grave sites, using forensic anthropology and archeology to search for the estimated 200,000 victims of the conflict. The Guatemalan government has failed to initiate a viable official exhumation program. As such, FAFG, and other non-governmental organizations, are the only entities working to identify victims and return the remains to surviving family members.

AAAS has long been involved in human rights issues in Guatemala and in the recovery of information about the disappeared. It established and trained Guatemala's first forensic anthropology team. In 2004, the AAAS Science and Human Rights Program honored FAFG at the AAAS Annual Meeting.

(Sources of information for this case include: Personal correspondence with Fredy Peccerelli.)

RELEVANT HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS:

The Human Rights Defenders Declaration:

Article 11: Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to the lawful exercise of his or her occupation or profession.

Article 12(2): The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights].

Article 6(a): Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others: To know, seek, obtain, receive and hold information about all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including having access to information as to how those rights and freedoms are given effect in domestic legislative, judicial or administrative systems.

Article 6(b): Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others: As provided for in human rights and other applicable international instruments, freely to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms;

Article 6(c): Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others: To study, discuss, form and hold opinions on the observance, both in law and in practice, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and, through these and other appropriate means, to draw public attention to those matters.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Please send faxes, letters, or emails:

Requesting that the government provide the anthropologists and other staff of the Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation with police protection;

Asking officials to investigate threats against the individuals concerned; and

Reminding government authorities of the Guatemala Historical Clarification Commission's recommendations that identified exhumations as an important step in achieving a full accounting of the past and national reconciliation. The Commission's report specifically states that the government should support the work of nongovernmental forensic scientists.

APPEAL AND INQUIRY MESSAGES SHOULD BE SENT TO:

Sr. Julio Godoy
Vice Secretary of State
Ministerio de Gobernacion
Email: magaly@mingob.gob.gt
Salutation: Dear Mr. Minister:

Sr Juan Luis Florido
Fiscal General (Attorney General)
Ministerio Publico
Email: fiscalgeneral@mp.lex.gob.gt, agudiel@mp.lex.gob.gt

Please send copies of your appeals, and any responses you may receive, or direct any questions you may have to Sarah Olmstead, AAAS Science and Human Rights Program, 1200 New York Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20005; tel. 202-326-6787; email shrp@aaas.org; or fax 202-289-4950.

The keys to effective appeals are to be courteous and respectful, accurate and precise, impartial in approach, and as specific as possible regarding the alleged violation and the international human rights standards and instruments that apply to the situation.

Reference to your scientific organization and professional affiliation is always helpful. To ensure that appeals are current and credible, please do not continue to write appeals on this case after 90 days from the date of the posting unless an update has been issued.