

EXTERNAL

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Fear for safety

5 September 1996

COSTA RICA

Reina Xiomara ZELAYA GONZÁLEZ, and her daughters:

Maryuri Johanna ZELAYA GONZÁLEZ, aged 6 (f)

Stephanía Xiomara CABALLERO ZELAYA, aged 12 (f)

Cynthia Lorena CABALLERO ZELAYA, aged 13 (f)

Reina Xiomara Zelaya, who fled to Costa Rica with her three young daughters in February 1996 after receiving death threats in her native Honduras, is once again in fear for her life. During the past two weeks she has been subjected to surveillance and harassment in Heredia, near San José, Costa Rica, apparently by members of the Honduran security forces.

The targeting of Reina Zelaya is believed to be a result of the fact that the father of two of her daughters, Cynthia and Stephanía, is Florencio Caballero, a former member of the Honduran military intelligence unit, *Batallón 3-16*, Battalion 3-16. He has testified during investigations into past human rights violations in Honduras (see below), and is currently seeking asylum in Canada.

On 29 August 1996, an unidentified man, believed to be a member of the Honduran security forces, followed Reina Zelaya throughout the day while she was receiving treatment at the *Hospital del Seguro*, a hospital in Heredia. The same man was seen near her place of residence on 30 August and reportedly approached six-year-old Maryuri Zelaya González to ask her about herself and her father and mother.

Unidentified men in civilian clothing, believed to be members of the Honduran security forces, have reportedly followed Reina Zelaya and her daughters since they arrived in Costa Rica. On 17 August, when Reina Zelaya was working at a bar in Heredia, she was reportedly approached by two unidentified men with Honduran accents, who asked her name and then left. The same men returned to the bar on the following two days but did not find her there. As a consequence of this harassment, Reina Zelaya had to give up her job at the bar.

Stephanía Xiomara was reportedly followed by unidentified individuals in a car with tinted windows after leaving school in late August.

Reina Zelaya and her daughters have been granted asylum in Costa Rica.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Former members of the Honduran military have provided information on the practice of "disappearance" in that country to the Inter American Court of Human Rights and other national and international agencies intent on establishing the truth about past gross human rights violations in Honduras. An official report estimates that at least 184 people "disappeared" in Honduras in the 1980s. Florencio Caballero testified to having worked between 1979 and 1984 as an interrogator for Battalion 3-16, a military intelligence unit entrusted with the task of targeting political suspects and carrying out their abduction, detention, torture and murder.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Reina Xiomara Zelaya and her daughters in the light of the harassment and surveillance against them, allegedly carried out by members of Honduran security forces in Costa Rica;
- calling for immediate steps to be taken to guarantee the safety of Reina Xiomara Zelaya and her daughters;
- urging an immediate investigation into these threats and that those responsible be brought to justice;
- as a part of this investigation, requesting that the Costa Rican authorities raise the matter with their Honduran counterparts.

APPEALS TO:

1) President of Costa Rica

Dr. José María Figueres Olsen
Presidente de la República de Costa Rica
Casa Presidencial
Apartado 10089
1000 San José, COSTA RICA
Telegrams: President Figueres, San José, Costa Rica
Faxes: + 506 253 9078
Salutation: Señor Presidente / Dear President

2) Interior Minister in Costa Rica

Lic. Maureen Clark
Ministro de Gobernación y Policía
Ministerio de Gobernación y Policía
Apartado 10006
1000 San José, COSTA RICA
Telegrams: Ministro Interior, San José, Costa Rica
Faxes: + 506 253 6243
Salutation: Señora Ministro / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

1) Human Rights Commissioner (Honduras)

Lic. Leo Valladares Lanza
Comisionado Nacional de los Derechos Humanos
Avda. Los Próceres 3623
Tegucigalpa MDC., HONDURAS
Fax: + 504 36 7213
e-mail: conadehl@ns.gbm.hn

2) Office for the Defence of the People (Costa Rica)

Sr. Rodrigo Alberto Carazo
Defensoría de los Habitantes de la República
Apdo Postal 1240-1007
San José, COSTA RICA
Fax + 506 296 2512

3. Newspaper in Costa Rica

La Nación
Llorente de Tibás
Apartado 10138
San José, COSTA RICA
Fax: +506 240 6480

4. Newspaper in Honduras

Diario Tiempo

Altos del Centro Comercial Prisa

Colonia Miramontés

Tegucigalpa, HONDURAS

Fax: +504 31 0422

and to diplomatic representatives of Costa Rica accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 20 October 1996.