

PUBLIC

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UA 181/08 Fear for safety/Death threats

GUATEMALA **Volunteers for Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice against Oblivion and Silence
(Hijos e Hijas por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio, HIJOS)**

A volunteer for the Guatemalan human rights organization Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice against Oblivion and Silence (*Hijos e Hijas por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio*, HIJOS) has been beaten and threatened with death, in an apparent attempt to stop the organization's human rights campaigning. The lives of all HIJOS members may be at risk.

On 21 June at around 3.30pm, a volunteer for HIJOS (who does not wish to be named) was walking along a road in the capital, Guatemala City, when two men got out of a grey pick-up truck and walked towards the volunteer. The volunteer tried to run away, but was grabbed by one of the men. According to the volunteer, who was interviewed by Amnesty International delegates in Guatemala City, the assailant said: "Wait. We just want you to do us a favour and tell HIJOS to stop messing about because we'll get tired and we'll have to kill you... We have you all on video. Who are the organizers of what you're doing?... Tell that bunch of trouble-makers to behave like men because we'll get tired and we'll kill you all." (*Espérate. Sólo queremos que me hagas el favor que le digas a esos de HIJOS que dejen de estar haciendo babosadas porque nos van a cansar y los vamos a tener que matar... Los tenemos camareados. Quiénes son los organizadores de lo que están haciendo?... Decíles a esta bola de peludos que se comporten como hombres porque nos vamos a cansar y les vamos a quebrar el culo*.) The man then hit the member of HIJOS twice in the stomach and ran away with his accomplice.

21 June is the Guatemalan National Day for the Victims of Enforced Disappearance. HIJOS organized a number of public events on that date.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Youths who lost relatives during Guatemala's internal armed conflict (1960-1996) founded the voluntary organization HIJOS in 1999. Since then, they have campaigned for justice for the human rights violations committed during the conflict and to preserve the memory of those who were killed or who disappeared. Their activities have included staging plays and music festivals, as well as publishing research. HIJOS is also part of a coalition of organizations challenging the celebration of the armed forces in Guatemala. This year their goal has been to abolish the forthcoming National Army Day (30 June) and its traditional military parade. On 8 June the government announced that the military parade had been cancelled due to budgetary constraints. Days later, a pro-military non-governmental organization said that they would go ahead with their own parade. An article in a Guatemalan newspaper on 15 June said that HIJOS were responsible for the cancellation of the official parade because they hate the Army.

HIJOS has previously been the target of threats, intimidation and office raids, most recently in 2005 (see UA 123/05, AMR 34/021/2005). To Amnesty International's knowledge, no-one has been brought to justice for these incidents.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of all HIJOS members;

- urging the authorities to take immediate and effective measures to guarantee their safety, in accordance with their own wishes;
- urging the authorities to immediately order a swift, impartial and full investigation into the death threat against a HIJOS member on 21 June, to make the results public and to bring those responsible to justice;
- reminding the authorities that human rights defenders have the right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior

Sr. Carlos Vinicio Gómez Ruiz

Ministro de Gobernación

6ª Avenida 13-71, Zona 1,

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: +502 2413 8658

Salutation: Dear Minister/Estimado Sr. Ministro

Attorney General and Head of the Public Prosecutor's Office

Lic. Juan Luis Florido

Fiscal General de la República y Jefe del Ministerio Público

8ª Avenida 10-67, Zona 1, Antiguo Edificio del Banco de los Trabajadores,

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: +502 2411 9124

+502 2411 9326

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Estimado Sr. Fiscal General

Human Rights Secretary

Sr. Orlando Blanco

Secretario Presidencial para los Derechos Humanos y la Paz (SEPREDEHPAZ)

7ª avenida 3-54

Edificio SAE, Zona 1

Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: +502 2248 3020 (business hours only)

Salutation: Dear Secretary/Estimado Sr. Secretario

COPIES TO:

HIJOS

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Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Email: hijosguatemala@gmail.com

and to diplomatic representatives of Guatemala accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 6 August 2008.