

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Death Threats

16 October 1990

GUATEMALA: José Vicente SOTO  
Carmen Rubenia ZEPEDA, aged 33

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Amnesty International is concerned at the recent death threats made against trade unionist, José Vicente Soto, who is Secretario de Educación (Education Secretary) of the trade union of the Instituto de Capacitación (INTECAP), Institute of Training in Guatemala City. Amnesty International is also concerned at the abduction on 13 October 1990 of his girl-friend Carmen Rubenia Zepeda, who was released a day later.

The abduction of Carmen Zepeda was carried out by heavily armed men in plain clothes, driving a cream coloured jeep with darkened windows, at 4pm on 13 October 1990, in Zone 7 of Guatemala City. Her sister, who was with her at the time of her abduction, stated that she tried to intervene, but was assaulted by the abductors. Amnesty International received information that Carmen Zepeda was blindfolded, transferred to another vehicle and taken to an unknown location. There she was interrogated, during which she was beaten and asked about José Soto's activities. The manner in which the abduction was carried out strongly suggests security force involvement. Carmen Zepeda was released, one day later, on Sunday 14 October 1990. Before her release her captors told that her abduction was a warning and that José Soto should leave the country immediately.

Following her release, however, the couple have continued to receive death threats. On 15 October they received two anonymous telephone calls. The caller reportedly told them that they had "let the woman go, but would get the other" [José Soto]. Amnesty International is concerned for their safety.

José Soto had recently received earlier threats warning him to stop his trade union activities, and was told that he and his girlfriend were being watched.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has been gravely concerned at what appears to be a serious deterioration in the human rights situation in Guatemala in the months prior to the general elections scheduled for 11 November. Victims have included trade unionists, grass roots organizations, human rights workers, students, peasants, displaced persons, church and opposition political groups. The choice of victim, the manner in which abuses were carried out, and the weapons used, indicated in many cases that official police and the military were involved, acting in the guise of the so-called "death squads". In many reported cases, threats preceded the victim's "disappearance" and/or extrajudicial execution.

#### RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at the abduction and beating of Carmen Rubenia Zepeda;
- asking for an investigation into her abduction and beating and that those found responsible be brought to justice;

- urging that immediate steps be taken to guarantee her physical integrity and that of José Vicente Soto.

**APPEALS TO**

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**COPIES TO:**

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and to diplomatic representatives of Guatemala in your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat,  
or your section office, if sending appeals after 27 November 1990.