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Possible Extrajudicial Execution

17 October 1990

GUATEMALA: Humberto GONZÁLEZ GAMARRA
Miguel Angel CORTÍN

Amnesty International is concerned at the apparent extrajudicial execution of Humberto González Gamarra, a 42-year-old journalist and owner of several radio stations, and secretary general of the Unión Revolucionaria Democrática (URD), Democratic Revolutionary Union, a newly-recognized left-wing political party that is not taking part in the forthcoming elections of 11 November.

According to the information received by Amnesty International, Humberto González Gamarra was driving with one of his sons along Roosevelt Avenue in downtown Guatemala City on the afternoon of 15 October, when, at the intersection with 25th Avenue, another car blocked his way. Several men with machine guns got out of the car and shot Humberto González Gamarra several times at close range, leaving the child unhurt. Humberto González Gamarra was taken to a nearby hospital, where he died shortly after he was admitted.

Amnesty International also learned with concern of the killing, on the morning of 15 October, of journalist and founder member of the Guatemalan Journalists' Association, Miguel Angel Cortín, aged 70, at 4th Street and 12th Avenue in Guatemala City. Reports have indicated that he was stabbed to death as he was walking in the street. Nothing was stolen from him, and sources in Guatemala fear his killing may have been politically motivated.

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, journalists, students, peasants, displaced persons, and members of religious and opposition groups. In recent months several members of Congress have received death threats, and the Congressional Representative for Jalapa department, Otto Rolando Ruano, was assassinated in July. At least two other politicians were killed since then and many have received threats or been harassed. On 5 October 1990 Juan José Rodil Peralta, former Minister of the Interior of the present administration and congressional candidate, suffered an assassination attempt in Guatemala City. Three political parties have reportedly suffered grenade attacks against their headquarters since April. Although the identity of the perpetrators of the abuses has not been established, the choice of victim, the manner in which the abuses were carried out, and the weapons used in many cases indicated that official security forces were involved, acting in the guise of the so-called "death squads". Amnesty International has also been concerned at the failure of the government to vigorously investigate human rights abuses, and fears that this failure has been a contributing factor in the escalating violence.

Humberto González Gamarra's father, Humberto González Juárez, a journalist and Press Secretary of the government of Jacobo Arbenz in the early 1950s, was also reportedly the victim of an extrajudicial execution in November 1970.

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

- expressing concern at the killing of Humberto González Gamarra and also at the killing of Miguel Angel Cortín in circumstances suggesting they may have been extrajudicially executed;

- urging that full impartial investigations be opened into their killings, that their findings be made public and that those responsible be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO

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Lic. Ramiro de León Carpio
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 Director General de la Policía Nacional
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COPIES TO:

- Guatemalan Journalists' Association (Asociación de Periodistas de Guatemala, 14 Calle 3-29, Zona 1, Guatemala, GUATEMALA
- Radio "Nuevo Mundo", 6 Avenida 10-45, Zona 1, Guatemala, GUATEMALA
- Lic Factor Méndez Doninelli, Director, CIEPRODH, Apartado Postal 419-1, Zona 7, 01907 Guatemala

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 30 November 1990.