

PUBLIC

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08 April 2008

UA 91/08 Fear For Safety

GUATEMALA Monsignor Alvaro Ramazzini (m)

Monsignor Alvaro Ramazzini, the head of the church in the department of San Marcos, some 250 kms east of Guatemala City has been threatened. Amnesty International believes this latest threat to his safety is linked to his work in defence of human rights.

At approximately 11am, on 31 March, a member of the diocese who works closely with Monsignor Alvaro Ramazzini was approached by a grey pick-up truck as they walked in the town of San Marcos. An unknown man wearing a hat and sunglasses got down from the truck and grabbed the diocese worker by the arm whilst revealing a handgun. He then said *"tell that son of a bitch priest not to get involved in things that do not concern him, his days are numbered"* (*"Decile a ese cura hijo de la gran puta, que deje de andarse metiendo en lo que no le importa, por que sus días están contados"*).

The diocese worker asked if he meant a particular priest who worked in the area and named him. The man responded *"I don't know that bastard, I am talking about Ramazzini"* (*"A ese desgraciado no lo conocemos, te estoy hablando de Ramazzini"*). He then used the tip of his gun to push the diocese worker before getting back in the truck and driving away.

Monsignor Ramazzini has been active in a number of human rights issues. In the past few months, the diocese which he leads has been involved in land rights issues by supporting rural communities in conflicts over land use; environmental issues related to a mining project operating locally, and in raising the profile of the human rights of migrants. He recently accompanied the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Migrants who visited the region on 24 and 25 March.

Monsignor Ramazzini has been subject to threats in previous years. Amnesty International called for investigation into an alleged threat to his life because of his work defending the human rights of indigenous peoples. The threat was alleged to have been made in the form a contract issued to kill him (see AMR 34/011/2005, *Guatemala Human rights activists under attack in 2005*, 9 March 2005). An Urgent Action in fear for his safety was issued, relating to threats believed to be linked to local land disputes (see UA 67/02, AMR 34/015/2002, 7 March 2002).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Human rights defenders in Guatemala work in constant danger of intimidation and harassment. In 2007, local organizations reported 195 reported attacks against them. The authorities frequently fail to provide them with adequate protection when they are threatened, do not investigate threats or attacks and do not bring those responsible to justice.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Monsignor Alvaro Ramazzini and staff of the Diocese of San Marcos;

- calling for an immediate, thorough and swift investigation into this incident, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate measures to guarantee members of the Diocese the safety necessary to conduct their activities, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- reminding the authorities of the right of human rights defenders to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

APPEALS TO:

President

Presidente de la República de Guatemala
Lic. Álvaro Colom
Casa Presidencial, 6ª Avenida, 4-18, Zona 1.
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax + 502 2383 8390

E-mail: cartapresidente@scspr.gob.gt

Salutation: Estimado Sr. Presidente

District Attorney

Fiscalia Distrital San Marcos
7a. Av. "A" 8 – 06, zona 1
San Marcos, San Marcos. Guatemala.

Fax + 502 7760 4350 / 7760 4355 / 7760 1051

(if someone answers, say "tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Estimado Sr./Sra. Fiscal.

COPIES TO:

Diocesis de San Marcos

10ª. Av. 6-28, zona 4
San Marcos, San Marcos. Guatemala.

Fax + 502 7760 3743

(if someone answers, say "tono de fax, por favor")

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 20 May 2008