

URGENT ACTION

WOMAN THREATENED FOR DEFENDING RAPE VICTIM

Guatemalan human rights defender Norma Cruz runs a women's rights organization: she and her colleagues have received death threats because of their work for a girl who has been raped. They are in grave danger.

Norma Cruz is the director of the Guatemala City-based *Fundación Sobrevivientes* (Survivors Foundation). She received a telephone death threat on 19 September at around 10.45pm. A man called her on her mobile and left a message: "I want you to drop the case of [man's name], you've got eight days to drop the case, otherwise you'll be in serious trouble, I will give you the head of your daughter or son, you bitch." (*quiero que dejes el caso de [nombre de la persona], tenés ocho días para dejar ese caso, si no te vas a ver en serios problemas, te voy a entregar la cabeza de tu hija o de tu hijo, perra maldita*). The message refers to a case of a girl who had been raped, whom Norma Cruz has been giving legal advice. Relatives of the girl are known to have been killed for the support they gave her. A man had rung *Fundación Sobrevivientes* earlier that day and delivered the same message to a member of staff.

On 14 August at around 8.30am, a dark car with tinted windows had followed Norma Cruz's daughter's husband. He called his wife back home, and told her to call the police. A few minutes later, he reached the house and the police arrived. The same car approached, but sped off when the men inside saw the police. Men have been keeping watch on the *Fundación Sobrevivientes* office since at least 26 July.

A man had left two answering machine messages on 14 May, threatening to kill Norma Cruz and her colleagues.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Norma Cruz, her family and her colleagues at *Fundación Sobrevivientes*, who have received death threats because of their work in defence of women's rights;
- urging the Human Rights Prosecutor to carry out a swift investigation into these death threats, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- urging the Minister of the Interior to provide them with effective protection in strict accordance with their wishes;
- calling on the Minister to approve and implement, as soon as possible, the national protection programme for human rights defenders;
- reminding the authorities that human rights defenders have a right to carry out their activities without any unfair restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE DD/MONTH/YEAR TO:

Minister of the Interior

Lic. Raúl Antonio Velásquez Ramos
Ministro de Gobernación
6ª Avenida 13-71, Zona 1,
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: +502 2413 8658

Salutation: Dear Minister/

Estimado Sr. Ministro

Human Rights Prosecutor

Lic. Aura Marina Mancilla
Fiscalía Especial de Sección de
Derechos Humanos
10a Calle 10-14, Edificio UP, 5to.
Nivel, Zona 1, Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: +502 2230 6043

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor/

Estimada Sra. Fiscal

And copies to:

Fundación Sobrevivientes
12 calle 11-63, Zona 1
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

WOMAN THREATENED FOR DEFENDING RAPE VICTIM

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Norma Cruz and her team provide a wide range of services to women who suffer acts of violence. They run a crisis centre for victims of sexual violence and they offer their support for those who are brave enough to take action through the courts, to bring those responsible to justice. Norma Cruz also campaigns for justice with the relatives of murdered women. Guatemala has seen a notable increase in the number of women killed over the last decade, and the state has largely failed to provide effective protection to those at risk. In the vast majority of cases, nobody is brought to justice, and many prosecutors have tended simply to blame the victim.

Norma Cruz has suffered attacks before, both against her directly and against those close to her. A relative of hers was abducted on 19 October 2008, and later released. The same relative received death threats four days later (see UA 296/08, 28 October 2008, AMR 34/022/2008).

Scores of attacks against human rights defenders are reported every year in Guatemala. Many of them suffer death threats and other acts of intimidation, in an attempt to stop them from carrying out their legitimate work; others are killed. By and large, nobody is brought to justice for these crimes and the Minister of the Interior is yet to approve and put in practice a national protection programme for human rights defenders, which was finalised earlier this year.

UA: 258/09 Index: AMR 34/012/2009 Issue Date: 25 September 2009

