

# URGENT ACTION

## TRADE UNIONIST THREATENED WITH DEATH

**Trade unionist Jorge Chen Alvarez, an official in the National Health Workers' Union, has received a death threat believed to be connected to his work improving health care services for pregnant women and girls.**

Jorge Chen Alvarez is an official of the branch of the National Health Workers' Union in the town of Poptún, in the northern department of Petén. On 29 November at around 7am he found a written death threat in a plastic bag in his garden, in front of his house. He believes the threat is linked to his attempts to improve the very poor quality health service that pregnant women receive in the hospital in Poptun. His life is in grave danger.

The death threat included a painted skull, and read: *Jorge Te damos quince días para que se vaya si no te va a pasar las de Carlos. Te busca la muerte* (Jorge we are giving you 15 days to leave if not what happened to Carlos will happen to you. Death is looking for you). It is not known who is meant by "Carlos."

Jorge Chen believes that this threat is related to his work as the union's Secretary on Conflict Resolutions, in which he attempts to resolve disputes between staff and management. In recent meetings with the hospital director, he has requested, on behalf of the union, that there be a review of medical services for pregnant women. He made this request to the people responsible for these services. His work and that of the Union aim to improve the quality of the health services and in particular the quality of the obstetrics services. Through their work, the Union have managed to prevent the abduction of two newborn babies, and they have persuaded the police to provide security for the hospital.

On 1 December Jorge Chen filed a complaint with the police about the death threat. The police have not provided him with any form of protection, and have made no arrests in connection with the threat.

### **PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:**

- ✓ expressing concern for the safety of Jorge Chen who received a death threat on 28 November;
- ✓ urging the authorities to take immediate steps to provide effective protection for him, in strict accordance with his wishes;
- ✓ calling on them to order a prompt, full and impartial investigation into the death threat, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- ✓ urging the authorities to support and reinforce the work of trade unionists and human rights activists working on the right to health and campaigning for improvements in maternal health and infant mortality.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 JANUARY 2010 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**

#### Attorney General and Head of the

#### Public Prosecutor's Office

Lic. José Amilcar Velásquez Zárate  
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 9326**

**Salutation: Dear Attorney General/**

**Estimado Sr. Fiscal General**

#### **And copies to:**

National Health Professionals' Union  
Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de  
Salud  
9ª Avenida 13-24, Edificio Ruth,  
Oficina 309, Zona 1  
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA  
**Fax: +502 2232 9289**

and to diplomatic representatives of  
Guatemala accredited to your country.

**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**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Poptún Branch of the National Health Workers' Union was formally established in 2007. Since then they have worked for the improvement of healthcare services. Members of other branches of the union in the Petén region have reported death threats and acts of intimidation linked to similar claims (see UA 105/09, 21 April 2009, AMR 34/007/2009).

Guatemala is a dangerous place for human rights defenders and trade unionists. Dozens suffer human rights abuses and violations every year, and some of them have been killed for carrying out their work.

UA: 329/09 Index: AMR 34/014/2009 Issue Date: 8 December

