

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 34/017/2008
30 July 2008

UA 210/08

Fear for safety/death threats

GUATEMALA

José Suasnavar (m), deputy director of the *Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala* (FAFG), Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation

José Suasnavar, deputy director of the Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation (*Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala*, FAFG) received four threatening SMS messages on and between 27/29 July. FAFG carries out exhumations of mass graves created during Guatemala's internal armed conflict (1960-1996).

The first SMS message was received on 27 July, and read: "Jose your day has come" (*Jose a cada coche le llega su sábado*). The second message was sent the following day, and read: "What's up pig careful with the landslides" (*Que pasa coche cuidado con los derrumbes*). A third SMS message was received on the same day, reading: *El antropólogo caba cuidado con los der*. Although misspelt and incomplete, the SMS message seems to read "The anthropologist excavates, careful with the landslide". The fourth SMS message was sent on 29 July and read "We're going to mess you up you're being watched" (*Te vamos a hacer caca estas vigilado*).

This is the third time in 2008 that FAFG members have received threats (See further information on UA 238/05 AMR 34/014/2008, 21 May 2008). The organization has received numerous threats over the years but the incidents this year have become more frequent. The safety of FAFG members and their relatives has become an increasing concern following these threats.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

FAFG exhumes the bodies of victims of massacres and killings committed during Guatemala's internal armed conflict. The forensic evidence produced by FAFG has been used to contribute to legal action against members of Guatemala's former military government.

This year there have been significant developments in the prosecution of those accused of crimes against humanity during Guatemala's internal armed conflict. In April, witnesses to the Guatemalan genocide of the 1980s gave testimony to a court in Guatemala for the first time. The Guatemalan court was gathering evidence on behalf of the Spanish courts as part of a genocide case currently proceeding in that country against high-ranking members of the military junta of the 1980s.

In July, Guatemala's National Compensation Programme (responsible for identifying those who should receive compensation for losses suffered during the internal armed conflict) delivered 1460 official complaints of human rights violations during the conflict years to the Public Prosecutor's Office.

On 28 July a document apparently signed by an organization entirely opposed to the progress of human rights cases in the Guatemalan and international judicial systems was circulated on the internet. The document attacked the Guatemalan president, staff of the Home Office and human rights defenders working on the issue of justice for past human rights violations and called for a coup d'état. The organization responsible for

the document has been vocal in its support for ex-members of Guatemala's past military governments accused of human rights abuses.

On 30 July, Guatemala's Attorney General resigned. The Attorney General had been accused of failing to tackle high levels of impunity, particularly with regard to cases of human rights abuses from the conflict years.

In 2002 the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights asked the government to provide protection for members of FAFG and their relatives. In 2006, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights made the same request, and called for an investigation to be carried out. The protection provided appears to have been inadequate, and no-one has yet been brought to justice for any of the threats received by FAFG members.

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

- expressing grave concern for the safety of José Suasnavar and other members of FAFG, following the threatening text messages received 27-29 July, and the threats received by other members of FAFG and their relatives in February and May 2008;
- urging the authorities to take immediate steps to provide effective protection to FAFG members,;
- calling on the authorities to order an immediate and thorough investigation into these threats and those made on 2 February and 19 and 22 May, identifying those responsible and bringing them to justice without further delay;
- 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 UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

APPEALS TO:

President of Guatemala

Lic. Álvaro Colom

Casa Presidencial, 6ª Avenida, 4-18, Zona 1.

Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax + 502 2383 8390

Salutation: Dear President / Estimado Sr. Presidente

Attorney General and Head of the Public Prosecutor's Office

Lic. José Amílcar Velásquez Zárte

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 9124

+502 2411 9326

Salutation: Dear Attorney General / Estimado Sr. Fiscal General

COPIES TO:

Foreign Minister

Lic. Roger Haroldo Rodas Melgar

Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores

2a Avenida 4-17, Zona 10 Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Fax: +502 2331 8410

Salutation: Dear Minister / Estimado Sr. Ministro

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 10 September.

