

UA 16/07 Fear for safety/ death threats

GUATEMALA Oscar Gianni González Donado (m)] Members of the Executive Committee of the
Lázaro René Reyes Mata (m)] *Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Empresa*
Max Alberto Estrada Linares (m)] *Portuaria Quetzal* (STEPQ, Quetzal Dockers'
Eulogio Obispo Monzón Mérida m)] Union)

Killed: Pedro Zamora Alvarez (m), Secretary General of STEPQ

Trade union leader Pedro Zamora Alvarez has been killed in the town of Puerto Quetzal, in Escuintla department, southern Guatemala. Since his death, several of his colleagues have reportedly received anonymous phone calls threatening them and their families with death within nine days. Amnesty International believes that their lives are in serious and imminent danger.

Pedro Zamora Alvarez, Secretary General of the *Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Empresa Portuaria Quetzal* (STEPQ, Quetzal Dockers' Union) was killed at around 7.50pm on 15 January, as he returned home from the local clinic with his two small children in his pick-up truck. Approximately 50 metres from his home, a car with five occupants was allegedly waiting for him. The five individuals reportedly shot approximately 100 bullets at Pedro Zamora's car, around 20 of which hit Pedro Zamora. Badly wounded, he crashed his car into a wall, before one of his assailants reportedly approached and fired a final shot to his head from close range. One of his children was also wounded in the attack.

The four remaining members of STEPQ's Executive Committee have since received death threats. On 17 January, Oscar Gianni González Donado and Lázaro René Reyes Mata received a total of three anonymous phone calls between them, made to their mobile phones between 1.45pm and 8pm. The caller's voice had apparently been electronically disguised, and reportedly told them that they, their other colleagues and their families would be killed within nine days. According to reports, a pick-up truck with tinted windows has been seen parked close to Eulogio Obispo Monzón Mérida's house in recent days.

The five members of the STEPQ Executive Committee and their families have allegedly been intimidated and attacked in the past year. Pedro Zamora, who was elected to the post of Secretary General in December 2005, was the principle target of the attacks and intimidation, in an apparent attempt to discourage STEPQ from pursuing contentious areas of union work. From 9 January to March 2006 he was regularly followed by a variety of vehicles, including a Toyota Yaris and a pick-up truck. Unknown individuals also visited his family home on a number of occasions to ask for his whereabouts during this period.

In June there was an attempt on the life of Max Alberto Estrada Linares. He was shot and seriously wounded by unknown individuals. The incident was reported to the Public Prosecutor's Office but those responsible have not been brought to justice.

On 2 November Pedro Zamora was followed by a vehicle whose occupants drew their weapons and fired shots in the air. He described the vehicle as a black or grey Chevrolet with tinted windows. Pedro Zamora also claimed to have been followed constantly throughout the month of December, obliging him to change his routine regularly.

On 10 January 2007 the Union's Executive Committee participated in a meeting at the Congress of the Republic in Guatemala City. The Union was informed at this meeting that nine dockers allegedly unfairly dismissed by the port of Quetzal in October 2006 would be reinstated, allegedly against the wishes of the port authorities. A dark-coloured Toyota Yercel allegedly followed the Union members as they drove away from the meeting. From that date until his death, Pedro Zamora told his colleagues that he was followed every day.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The STEPQ is affiliated to the International Transport Workers' Federation, and works to improve the working conditions of its members, as well as campaigning for basic services to be made available for workers' family members. Recent activities have included opposing plans to build a new container terminal at the port, due to fears that this could lead to future privatization and job losses. The STEPQ has also been active in campaigning for the reinstatement of the nine workers who were allegedly unfairly dismissed on 9 October 2006 during a peaceful demonstration against the construction project.

The Guatemalan *Movimiento Nacional de Derechos Humanos*, National Human Rights Movement reports that between January and August 2006, there were 161 threats or attacks against human rights defenders, a similar level compared to the same period in 2005. Amnesty International believes that the lack of political will to deal with the longstanding issues of impunity, a weak judicial system, clandestine groups, and hostility to human rights defenders in Guatemala has allowed this wave of attacks against human rights defenders to go unchallenged.

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

- expressing grave concern for the safety of Oscar González, Lázaro Reyes, Max Estrada and Eulogio Monzón and their families;

- calling on the authorities to order a full and impartial investigation into the death threats against them and the killing of Pedro Zamora, and asking that those responsible be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to guarantee the safety of Oscar González, Lázaro Reyes, Max Estrada and Eulogio Monzón, in strict accordance with their own wishes;
- reminding the authorities that human rights defenders have the right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Lic. Oscar Berger Perdomo
Presidente de la República de Guatemala
Casa Presidencial, 6 a. Avenida, 4-18 zona 1
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax + 502 2221 4423 / 2238 3579

Salutation: Dear Mr. President/Estimado Sr. Presidente

Attorney General and Head of the Public Prosecutor's office

Lic. Juan Luis Florido
Fiscal General de la República y Jefe del Ministerio Público
Edificio Ministerio Público
Tercer Nivel, 8a. Avenida 10-67, Zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala, 01001, Guatemala
Fax: + 502 2411 9124/ 9335/ 9336 (if someone answers, say "tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Estimado Sr. Fiscal General

COPIES TO:

Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Empresa Portuaria - Quetzal (STEPQ)
c/o Confederación Central General de Trabajadores de Guatemala (CGTG)
3a. Avenida 12-22 Zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala
Fax + 502 2251 3212

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 2 March 2007.*****