

# URGENT ACTION



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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**

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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 misspelled 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, May 21, 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 Program (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.

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***Amnesty International's mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.***

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-etat. 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:**

- 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: 011 502 2383 8390  
Salutation: Dear President

**Attorney General and Head of the Public**

**Prosecutor's Office**

Lic. José Amílcar 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: 011 502 2411 9124  
011 502 2411 9326  
Salutation: Dear Attorney 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: 011 502 2331 8410  
Salutation: Dear Minister

Ambassador Jose Guillermo Castillo  
Embassy of Guatemala  
2220 R St. NW  
Washington DC 20008  
Fax: 1 202 745 1908  
Email: [info@guatemala-embassy.org](mailto:info@guatemala-embassy.org)

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.**  
Check with the AIUSA Urgent Action office if sending appeals after 10 September.