Stop Femicide in Guatemala!

On 12 August 2005, Claudina Isabel Velásquez Paíz, a 19-year-old law student Guatemala City, left her house to go to class, and disappeared. Her parents unsuccessfully sought help from local police stations. The following morning they received a call from the morgue informing them that Claudina's body had been found. She had been raped and killed by a shot to her head. As with over 1,900 other cases of women killed in Guatemala in the last few years, the authorities failed to respond to reports of Claudina's disappearance. And thus far, they have failed to investigate her killing.

Guatemalan women encounter widespread discrimination and violence in all areas of their lives. The current wave of brutal killings and the state's lack of response reflects this discrimination in both law and in practice. Amnesty International calls on the Guatemalan Government to demonstrate its political will to investigate these crimes, prosecute the offenders, and stop the killing!

Amnesty International (AI) is deeply concerned about the increase in brutal, sexually violent murders of women and girls in Guatemala, and the alarming lack of investigations and prosecutions of these serious crimes. While the over 1,900 killings between 2001 and March 2006 reflect different motives and circumstances, a two-year AI study concludes that the brutality, mutilation and sexual violence in many of these killings amount to torture, and that the victims' gender determines whether and how the police and Public Ministry respond. To date, less than 9% of these cases have been investigated, and those few investigations are often problematic.

We, the undersigned, ask you to:

- Publicly condemn the abduction and murder of women and girls; call for zero tolerance of violence against women; and direct all state officials to acknowledge the serious nature of these crimes;
- Ensure that the recently created National Commission to Address Femicide and the National Forensic Institute have the resources and the authority to protect women's lives, and to thoroughly investigate all crimes of violence against women;
- Ensure that the Public Ministry's Office of the Special Prosecutor for Crimes against Life has sufficient resources for its four units focused on the killings of women, and that Ministry staff throughout Guatemala are trained in human rights, women's rights and crime investigation;
- Urge Congress to go beyond the provisional suspension of discriminatory Article 22, and enact legislative measures that truly promote and protect women's rights, and are in line with international standards on violence against women;
- Increase access to justice for the victims' relatives, particularly those who lack funds for legal aid.

Name **Address**

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