

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear for safety

3 November 1993

GUATEMALA: Marco CHOCO DAMAS, member of the *Consejo Nacional de Desplazados de Guatemala (CONDEG)*, The National Council for the Displaced of Guatemala

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Marco Choco Damas, an indigenous man of the Quekchi ethnic group. According to reports, he was detained by soldiers on 27 October 1993 in the place known as "La Cumbre", in Salama, Baja Verapaz, while he was on his way by bus from Coban to Guatemala City. He is reportedly being held at the army barracks in Salama, Baja Verapaz.

Marco Choco is an active member of the *Consejo Nacional de Desplazados de Guatemala (CONDEG)* and a Literacy Promoter for this organization in the village of Las Conchas, near Coban, Alta Verapaz.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

For many years Amnesty International has been concerned about human rights violations directed against specific groups in Guatemala, including indigenous peoples, trade unionists, student leaders, journalists and those working with non-governmental organizations.

CONDEG was founded in September 1989 to defend the rights of displaced Guatemalans, the majority of them indigenous peasants, who fled areas of conflict during the army's counter-insurgency campaign of the late 1970s and early 1980s. The Guatemalan army apparently continues to consider displaced persons, and those working with them, particularly those affiliated to CONDEG, as "subversive": members and leaders of the group have suffered human rights violations in recent years, including "disappearance", extrajudicial execution, intimidation and harassment. Most recently, CONDEG members and their families were reportedly subjected to intimidatory acts by two armed men (see UA 322/93, AMR 34/62/93, 14 September). Also as reported in UA 309/93 (AMR 34/59/93, 7 September) a member of CONDEG, Maurillo Chiquin, was harassed by armed men. CONDEG members were amongst the demonstrators who were fired upon in Colotenango, Huehuetenango on 3 August 1993 by members of the Civil Defence patrols. At least one person died in the attack and several others were reportedly wounded. The demonstrators had been staging a peaceful protest against alleged threats and harassment of local families by members of the army and the Civil Defence Patrols (see UA 259/93, AMR 34/52/93, 6 August).

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in Spanish, English, or in your own language:

- expressing concern at the detention of Marco Choco Damas;
- urging the authorities to clarify his legal situation;
- urging that he either be released or brought promptly before a competent

court;

- asking that his safety and well-being be guaranteed.

APPEALS TO:

1) President of the Republic:

S.E. Ramiro de León Carpio

Presidente de la República de Guatemala

Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegrams: Presidente de León Carpio, Guatemala, Guatemala

Faxes: + 502 2 537472, + 502 2 519702

Telexes: 5331 CAPRES GU

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President

3) Minister of Defence:

Gral. Mario Enríquez Morales

Ministro de Defensa

Ministerio de Defensa

Palacio Nacional, Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa, Guatemala, Guatemala

Faxes: + 502 2 537472

Telexes: 5361 COMGUA GU

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Human Rights Procurator:

Lic. Jorge García Laguardia

Procurador de los Derechos Humanos

12 Avenida 12-72, Zona 1,

Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Faxes: + 502 2 81734

Head of the Presidential Commission Coordinating the Policies of the Executive relating to Human Rights:

Lic. Jorge Gonzalo Cabrera Hurtarte

Presidente

COPREDEH

15 Avenida 18-38, Zona 13

Guatemala, GUATEMALA

CONDEG

7a Avenida 8-56, zona 1

Edificio El Centro

7° Nivel, Oficina 7-12

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 8 December 1993.