

via fax: 011 502 7942 0669

Lic. Rodolfo Gonzalo Hernández Garzaro

District Attorney, Departamento Chiquimula, Guatemala

via fax: 011 502 22894743

Israel López de Leon

Director of Professional Responsibility, National Civilian Police

October 13, 2005

Dear Sirs:

We are concerned for the safety of journalist **Edwin Eliseo Paxtor Crisostomo**, who hosts the news program on Chiquimula's local cable television and is the regional correspondent for the national media outlets, Prensa Libre, Noti7 and Radio Cadena Sonora. On July 11, he was one of the journalists assaulted with machetes by former members of the Civil Defence Patrols (PAC) while he was filming a demonstration in Chiquimula. Death threats have escalated since July 27 when Paxtor reported the assaults of four youths by plain-clothed agents of the Criminal Investigation Service (SIC) of the National Civil Police (PNC).

More recently, Paxtor reported these intimidations and threats to the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office, who referred them to the local judge:

September 11: an unknown man told him on the phone, "your days are counted, we are going to kill you."

September 12: he was followed by a black four-wheel drive vehicle.

September 15: he was followed by a red Toyota Corolla with tinted windows.

September 16: when his daughters returned home, a man standing near the house made threatening gestures to them.

September 23: anonymous phone caller tried to lure him to an isolated location by saying that a murder had taken place there.

Edwin Paxtor has complained on several occasions to the Departmental Governor of Chiquimula about the SIC harassment. On one occasion, the Department Governor accompanied him to an assignment so that he would not be prevented from taking photographs. The Governor has discussed the situation with members of the SIC who have told him that Edwin Paxtor "...never has anything good to say about them." In early September, Paxtor spoke with the special Attorney for Crimes Against Journalists and Trade Unionists, but the conversation was overheard by a member of the National Civil Police. Since then his work has also been obstructed by members of the PNC other than SIC.

We urge you to:

- take immediate measures, in accordance with **Edwin Paxtor's** wishes, to guarantee his safety and that of his family;
- take immediate measures to guarantee that he can carry out his work as a journalist without obstruction or harassment;
- begin an immediate and thorough investigation into the death threats and other harassment, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;

Thank you for your prompt attention.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

Copies: Boris Roberto España Caceres, Gobernador de Chiquimula ~ via fax: 011 502 7942 0282
Comisario Hector Rodriguez Quiroa, Head of Police, Chiquimula ~ via fax: 011 502 7942 0120
Ambassador José Guillermo Castillo, Guatemalan Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 1 202 745 1908
Ambassador James Derham, US Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 011 502 2334 8477 or 011 502 2326 4000
Courtney Turner, Guatemala Desk, US State Department ~ via fax: 1 202 647 2597
U.S. Senators DeWine and Voinovich ~ via email
U.S. Representatives Brown, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

UA 260/05 Guatemala

The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: