

On Feb. 4, LCHR sent a letter to the Guatemalan authorities regarding recent acts of intimidation against Public Prosecutor Tatiana Morales Valdizon, who was on the Attorney General's litigation team in the October trial of the three military officers accused of ordering the murder of anthropologist and human rights activist Myrna Mack. Tatiana Morales heads the newly created division within the attorney general's office that investigates and prosecutes attacks and threats against human rights defenders.

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**Lic. Alfonso Portillo Cabrera**

President of the Republic of Guatemala  
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Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

**Lic. Adolfo Reyes Calderón**

Ministro de Gobernación  
Ministerio de Gobernación  
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February 4, 2003

On behalf of the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, I'm writing to express serious concern for the safety of Public Prosecutor Tatiana Morales Valdizón and her team of investigators from the Public Ministry (Ministerio Público). I urge you to take the measures necessary to guarantee the safety of these individuals, ensure that such threats and intimidation are immediately ended, that they are fully investigated and that the perpetrators are brought to justice.

Licda. Morales and her team of investigators are conducting research on human rights violations including extrajudicial executions and illegal raids carried out by the Antinarcotics Operations Department (DOAN) in Chocón, Izabal Department. According to reports, on January 23, as they were returning to their homes from Chocón, they were followed by several unidentified automobiles. Although they managed to escape those that were following them and reported the incident to the National Civil Police, they were nonetheless followed later by men driving recklessly in other vehicles. No one was hurt, but the situation has obviously caused great worry to the whole team and members of their families.

As you are well aware, there has been a dramatic increase of threats and acts of intimidation against human rights defenders as well as lawyers and judges involved in human rights cases. The resultant atmosphere of insecurity has served to undermine the important work of these individuals, organizations and institutions in the promotion of human rights. Indeed, the Attorney General's office appointed Licda. Morales specifically to investigate and prosecute

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threats, intimidation and attacks against human rights defenders, and it is widely believed that these recent acts of intimidation are carried out to hamper this work. Given the recent rise in such threats and attacks and the unique nature of Licda.'s Morales' work we urge you pay special attention to this case.

The failure of the Guatemalan government to address the ongoing intimidation and escalating threats constitutes a serious violation of internationally recognized human rights standards, including its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the American Convention on Human Rights. The threats and attacks violate Principle 16 of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, which provides: "Governments shall ensure that lawyers are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference." In addition, Principle 17 provides: "Where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of the discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities."

The Lawyers Committee will continue to monitor the situation and we would appreciate any information you can provide concerning steps taken to end these threats and attacks and to pursue the perpetrators.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael McClintock". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Michael McClintock  
Director of Program