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## ARTICLE 19

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### Guatemala: ARTICLE 19 condemns attack on Gladys Monterroso

**On 25 March, Gladys Monterroso, a well-known Guatemalan lawyer, professor and politician, was abducted from a restaurant in Guatemala City by unidentified assailants. The event took place less than a day after her spouse, Guatemalan Special Prosecutor for Human Rights, Sergio Morales, published a landmark report on human rights abuses during the country's decades-long civil conflict.**

Monterroso who is also in charge of the women's arm of the *Encuentro por Guatemala* political party was kidnapped, sedated and tortured. Although she was later freed, she received hospital treatment for serious injuries and is currently recovering at home.

Morales released the *Special Report of the Historical Archives of the National Police: the Right to Know* on 24 March, in an historic act paving the way for reconciliation in Guatemala. The report records the contents of 80 million documents dating from 1960 to 1996, discovered in police archives four years ago.

The archives contain vital information on police involvement in torture, enforced disappearances and other abuses. This archival evidence has already resulted in the recent detention of two former members of a police unit, implicated in death squad activities during the conflict.

It is estimated that up to 250,000 people disappeared or were killed between 1960 and 1996, and it is believed that the Guatemalan military and police were responsible for the majority of abuses. To date, no high-ranking member of the military or government has been brought to justice for human rights violations.

Many of the victims of abuses were women who were systematically subject to rape, mutilation and sexual attack. Sergio Morales' office has also consistently reported that violent attacks against women remain high in Guatemala, despite the peace process, and that very few cases are properly investigated or prosecuted.

Although no-one has claimed responsibility for the attack on Gladys Monterroso, there is a widespread belief among human rights organisations and the Special Prosecutor's office that this event was directly linked to her husband's work and, particularly, the aforementioned report.

*"ARTICLE 19 believes that the abduction and torture of Gladys Monterroso is both cowardly and despicable,"* states Dr Agnès Callamard, ARTICLE 19 Executive Director. *"It is a sad and tragic reminder that the past is the present and also probably the future, as long as impunity prevails. Those responsible for the attack must be found*

*and prosecuted. ARTICLE 19 sends Ms Monterroso our deepest sympathy and solidarity and salutes her immense courage.”*

*“Guatemalans have the right to know the truth about their past,” continues Callamard. “It is both a fundamental human right and a psychological necessity for the victims of abuses. It is also essential for the country’s healing process and democratic evolution.”*

ARTICLE 19 celebrates the publication of this report and expresses support for the Office of the Special Prosecutor for Human Rights, as they engage in the process of transitional justice for Guatemala.

**NOTES FOR EDITORS:**

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- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.