

1-6-2005

## Guatemalan Activists Track Down Donaldo Alvarez Ruiz But Mexico Lets Him Slip Away

LADB Staff

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen>

---

### Recommended Citation

LADB Staff. "Guatemalan Activists Track Down Donaldo Alvarez Ruiz But Mexico Lets Him Slip Away." (2005).  
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen/9265>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in NotiCen by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [amywinter@unm.edu](mailto:amywinter@unm.edu).

## **Guatemalan Activists Track Down Donaldo Alvarez Ruiz But Mexico Lets Him Slip Away**

*by LADB Staff*

*Category/Department: Guatemala*

*Published: 2005-01-06*

On Dec. 10, the Spanish government issued an international arrest warrant for Donaldo Alvarez Ruiz, Guatemala's interior minister during the government of Gen. Fernando Romeo Lucas Garcia (1978-1982). The former minister is wanted in Spain for genocide, torture, and other crimes (see NotiCen, 2000-03-30). Spain also accuses him of being responsible for the 1980 assault in Guatemala on the Spanish Embassy in which 36 people burned to death. One of the 36 was Vicente Menchu, father of Nobel Peace Prize winner, and now member of the Guatemalan government, Rigoberta Menchu Tum.

The hunt for the accused official in Mexico has thus far been fruitless, amid charges that the Mexican government has made a deal to let him escape. According to various reports, Alvarez Ruiz left Guatemala after the March 1982 coup that installed Gen. Efraim Rios Montt as de facto president and went to live in Miami until 1989, when he moved to Mexico City. There, he was granted the FM3 residence permit, conferring immigrant status. He eventually took up residence in Tlanepantla, Mexico state.

In 1999, Rigoberta Menchu charged Alvarez in Spain with genocide, state terrorism, and torture for acts committed during the internal war in Guatemala that began in 1962.

Menchu's allegations date back to before the embassy assault, going back to the early 1960s, when Alvarez was close to President Enrique Peralta Azurdia (1963-1966) who toppled the regime of President Miguel Ydigoras (1958-1963). Peralta Azurdia was a brutal violator of human rights, and Alvarez was his henchman. Later, during the presidency of Carlos Arana Osorio (1970-1974), as subsecretario de la presidencia, history records that Alvarez drew up execution lists for the death squads. Subsequent to the Menchu accusation, between 2000 and 2004 Alvarez lived both in Miami and Mexico.

On Dec. 10, 2004, Spanish Judge Fernando Grande-Marlaska of the Audiencia Nacional of his country signed and sent to Mexico an order for the arrest and extradition of Alvarez. The indictment accuses him further of having directed death squads in Guatemala responsible for thousands of deaths of indigenous people and of being responsible for the extrajudicial execution of Guatemalan opposition leaders. Concurrent with the arrival of the warrant in Mexico, human rights activists from several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including the Fundacion Rigoberta Menchu (FRM), and Guatemalans still in exile in Mexico took up a vigil at the property in Tlanepantla to demand justice and prevent his escape. But they had missed him.

Hugo Alvarez, Donaldo's son, told the local press he had not had contact with his father in months, and he invited reporters in to search the house. "Come in and look," Hugo told three photographers, "to prove he's not here, and I haven't seen him for many years." At that point, Alvarez was not yet

a fugitive in Mexico. In accordance with a treaty between Mexico and Spain, an extradition order must pass through the Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores (SRE) to a federal judge and then on to the Procuraduria General de la Republica (PGR).

A SRE spokesperson told reporters the order had been passed on. Mexican officials suspected Alvarez had been warned to flee. After the horse had fled, on Dec. 16, Mexico closed the barn doors with a migratory alert for Alvarez at 172 border crossings. Interior Secretary Santiago Creel and Attorney General Rafael Macedo vowed to apprehend him but told the media they had no idea where he was.

Representatives of the Fundacion Rigoberta Menchu and other NGOs accused the Mexican government of letting him escape. "It is a true scandal that he has escaped," said Adolfo Aguilar, former Mexican ambassador to the UN. "The Secretaria de Gobernacion (SEGOB) was informed of his whereabouts, of his movements, of all the information that would have allowed them to arrest him. It is inexplicable; it is not police negligence." Much of that information came from the Fundacion Rigoberta Menchu, whose representative Gustavo Meono delivered it personally to the PGR. The information included the address of another house owned by the fugitive, where he might have been hiding.

The Fundacion and another organization, Alaide Foppa, named for a Guatemalan intellectual who had been disappeared in 1980, had been following Alvarez for four years. "In a very laborious and complex manner, we have been following the trail, we've followed false leads for four and a half years. Finally, this work led us to find him in Mexico," said Julio Solorzano Foppa, son of Alaide. Meono added, "I don't understand. If we, with our limited and amateur resources, found and followed him, how could the Procuraduria General de la Republica Mexicana not capture him?"

The escape was especially galling because some of the NGOs that have been on the case through the years were encouraged by having him indicted in Spain, a country capable of meting out justice in a way that Guatemala cannot. Explaining the inexplicable

On Dec. 22, Lizbeth Rosas Montero, a Mexican federal deputy of the opposition Partido de la Revolucion Democratica (PRD), accused the government of President Vicente Fox of having allowed Alvarez Ruiz to escape. She said the escape was a quid pro quo in exchange for Guatemala's support of the Mexican candidate for secretary-general of the Organization of American States (OAS), Ernesto Derbez. The allegation indirectly implicates the government of Guatemalan President Oscar Berger in a conspiracy.

Rosas Montero called her government's action "unequal and selective," noting that the government was able to capture Basque separatists, but not the Guatemalan. She said it proved that official talk of human rights is only rhetoric. She said the escape contradicted the positions of Creel and Macedo because they knew Alvarez had received protection from immigration authorities despite his record and because the negligence surrounding his escape was suspicious.

Rosas Montero has authored a legislative resolution demanding that the PGR get the job of catching Alvarez done and that the legal proceedings leading to extradition be expedited. The resolution

would also exhort the Secretaria de Gobernacion to revoke Alvarez's residency "as an act to dignify our country before the world." The Fox government did not immediately respond to the accusations. The Comision Permanente of the Camara de Diputados has received a request from Rosas for reports from the Secretaria de Gobernacion and the PRG on the matter.

-- End --