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## **Government in Guatemala Is Accused of Backing Crimes**

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GUATEMALA CITY, April 9 — An alliance of social groups has accused the Guatemalan government of being behind a string of burglaries and attacks intended to intimidate human rights groups in the country.

In a written statement on Tuesday, the alliance said the attacks left many in the groups terrified that they would be the targets of violence. One alliance leader said he believed the crimes were related to creation of a state commission to investigate civil rights abuses.

On Monday, thieves raided the Guatemala City home of Mario Polanco, a director of the Mutual Support Group, which is for relatives of people who died or disappeared during the country's civil war, from 1960 to 1996.

That attack came hours after assailants broke into the offices of the country's human rights ombudsman in Puerto Barrios, 150 miles northeast of Guatemala City.

On Friday, kidnappers abducted Diego Xon, a Mayan priest who was active in the Mutual Support Group in the largely Indian province of Quiché, in central Guatemala.

Mr. Xon was well known for his condemnation of a plan to pay Guatemalan peasants who joined paramilitary forces and helped the government carry out anti-insurgency campaigns at the height of the war. About 200,000 people, mostly Mayan peasants, were killed before peace agreements ended the fighting.

The statement said government officials indirectly organized these and other recent attacks and demanded that the authorities "investigate, identify and prosecute those responsible for these crimes, which together provide evidence of continuous pressure and systematic policies" against human rights groups.

Alejandro Pérez, a spokesman for President Alfonso Portillo, could not be reached to comment.

Gustavo Meono, director of a group founded by Rigoberta Menchú, the winner of the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize, said the violence demonstrated "that these types of attacks are not isolated incidents, nor are they the product of common crime."

Mr. Meono said the homes and offices of human rights activists are often raided by thieves who "come for information and take files and computer hard drives."

He added, "These kinds of attacks happen over and over again."

Mr. Meono said criminals associated with the government launched new attacks because a state commission had been created to investigate illegal groups and clandestine networks that violate human rights.