

via fax: 011 502 2221 4423 or 2221 4445

Sr. Jimmy Morales
President of Guatemala

via fax: 011 502 2411 8168 or 2411 9210

Lic. Thelma Esperanza Aldana Hernández
Attorney General of Guatemala

August 26, 2016

Dear President Morales and Attorney General Aldana:

We are very disturbed by the latest episode of an escalating wave of intimidation against legal officials. At 6am on August 15 in Guatemala City, eight armed men posing as police officers forced their way into the house of **Ramón Cadena Rámila**, Central America Director of the Geneva-based International Commission of Jurists (ICJ). The assailants forced his family and a security guard to wait outside on their knees while they ransacked the property.

Cadena, who was not at home at the time of the raid, has recently been representing Guatemalan communities on behalf of the ICJ, in cases against multinational mining companies. He has also been involved in a number of prominent human rights cases, including the trial of former President Efraín Ríos Montt, accused of orchestrating genocide and committing crimes against humanity during Guatemala's civil war.

Attacks against prominent lawyers and activists have intensified since the arrest in January of 14 ranking former military officers for alleged crimes against humanity during the country's civil war. A few days after the arrests were made, Cadena, who is an expert witness in the case, and two other prominent human rights lawyers were formally accused of participating in an array of crimes, including threats, illegal association and organized crime by the Foundation Against Terrorism. The litigation has been widely condemned as malicious by international organizations.

Annie Bird, Director of Rights and Ecology who works with human rights defenders in the region, said: "Ramón Cadena is perhaps the most important figure in human rights in Central America, accompanying the most significant [legal] cases in Guatemala and Honduras. This is a message to all of the human rights lawyers in the region."

Because of our grave concern about the wave of harassment and intimidation taking place against human rights defenders in Guatemala, we **strongly urge** that you

- carry out an immediate, full and transparent investigation into the armed raid on the home of Ramón Cadena Rámila
- follow the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers to safeguard legal professionals so that they may conduct their vital work free from concern of placing themselves and those around them in danger.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai and Christine Stonebraker-Martinez
Co-Coordinators

copies: Gladys Maritza Ruiz de Vielman, Guatemalan Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202 745 1908
Todd Robinson, US Ambassador to Guatemala ~ via fax: 011 502 2331 2348
Thomas Lee, Guatemala Desk, US State Dept ~ via email LeeT2@state.gov
Enrique Gil Botero, Rapporteur for Guatemala, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202 458 3992
Jose de Jesus Orozco Hernandez, Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202 458 3650
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

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