

via fax: 011 502 2362-02 37 Carlos Vielman Minister of the Interior, Guatemala	Via fax: 011 502 775 1370 Oficial Segundo Norberto Revolorio Hernández National Civilian Police, Guatemala
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January 22, 2005

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are extremely concerned for the safety of **Armando Sánchez**, a lawyer who has received a death threat. This appears to be an effort to force him to drop some of his cases, which include: government officials helping a murder suspect escape; a murder by drug traffickers; and labor disputes between farmers and their employers.

In August 2004 he filed a complaint against local police, alleging they had unlawfully closed a right-of-way in the town where he lives and works, Coatepeque, in the department of Quetzaltenango, in the east of the country. After he filed the complaint the local prosecutor charged him with coercion and incitement to commit an offense.

On December 23 an anonymous caller to Armando Sánchez's mobile phone told him he would be killed if he did not leave the country within five days. On December 26 at 2:00a.m., three men knocked on a neighbor's door and asked which house belonged to Sánchez. They left because two police officers were stationed outside Sánchez's door. Our concern for Sánchez's safety has increased because the 24-hour police protection has been reduced to just three hours per night.

We strongly urge you to:

- begin a prompt, impartial and exhaustive investigation into the death threat received by Armando Sánchez on December 23, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;
- take steps to ensure that lawyers and other members of the legal profession, like Armando Sánchez, are able to carry out their legitimate work without fear of harassment;
- resume 24-hour police protection for Armando Sanchez

Please take prompt measures to ensure that members of the legal profession, like Armando Sánchez, can carry out their legitimate work due to threats and harassment.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

cc: Lic.Rodolfo Hernández, District Attorney~via fax:011-502 775 1645
 Diario Prensa Libre, newspaper ~via fax: 011 502 2251 8768
 Lic. Armando Sánchez ~ via fax: 011 502 7775 1106
 Ambassador José Guillermo Castillo ~via fax:1 202 745 1908
 Ambassador John Hamilton ~ via fax 011-502-334-8477
 Robert Boynton, Guatemala Desk Officer, US State Dept. ~ via fax: 202.647.2597
 Senator George Voinovich, US Senate ~ via email: Daniel_knezevic@voinovich.senate.gov
 U.S. Representatives Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email and fax

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The following people hereby urge that you take action on this matter as indicated in this letter.