

via fax 011 502 221 4423/ 2239 0090 Licenciado Oscar Berger Perdomo Presidente de la República de Guatemala	via fax: 011 502 251 2218 Juan Luis Florido Fiscalía General del Ministerio Público, Guatemala
via fax 011 502 362 0237 Carlos Vielman Ministro de Gobernación, Guatemala	

February 23, 2005

Dear Sirs:

On January 22, 2005, heavily armed men entered the home of Gumercinda Argüeta, brutally murdered his two year-old daughter **Yira Argüeta López** and severely beat his wife. Argüeta is a leader with the Recovery of Historical Memory Project (REMHI) and is their delegate to the National Human Rights Movement.

Bishop Juan Gerardi was beaten to death in 1998, two days after releasing the Catholic Church's REMHI Report, which blamed the military for 90% of the deaths and disappearances during Guatemala's 36-year civil war.

Now **Bishop Msgr. Alvaro Ramazzani**, a witness to the Gerardi murder who is active with the REMHI project, is targeted. In January the Guatemalan Human Rights Ombudsman's Office made public an assassination plot against Ramazzani, the bishop of San Marcos Department. This follows an accusation by President Oscar Berger that Bishop Ramazzani was indirectly responsible for the violence on January 11, in which at least one campesino was shot to death while protesting the transport of mining equipment.

As the director of the Catholic Church's Land Pastoral Office, Bishop Ramazzini strongly opposes the controversial mining projects in San Marcos where the Canadian mining company, Montaña, and the Guatemalan government have interests. He has also condemned the violent eviction of campesinos from Nueva Linda plantation in Retalhuleu Department on August 31, 2004, where heavily armed police, military and plantation security guards were responsible for the deaths of seven peaceful protesters and four police officers. (Campesinos had been occupying the plantation to demand justice for the kidnapping and probable killing of one of their leaders, René Reyes.)

We strongly urge the authorities to:

- investigate the tragic murder of Yira Argüeta López and the severe beating of her mother, make the results public and bring the perpetrators to justice;
- insure the safety of Bishop Msgr. Alvaro Ramazzini, conduct an investigation into the assassination plot and punish those responsible;
- halt unlawful and violent land evictions such as those at Nueva Linda.

Thank you for your prompt attention to these matters.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai , Coordinator

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Senator George Voinovich, US Senate ~ via email: Daniel_knezevic@voinovich.senate.gov
U.S. Representatives Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via fax, email

GHRC_Guatemala

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