

VIA FAX: 1-202-522-3031

**Mr. John Wolfensohn**  
President, World Bank

February 26, 2005

Dear Mr. Wolfensohn:

The insensitivity and inhumanity of the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, amply demonstrated during the construction of the Chixoy Hydro-Electric Dam in Guatemala from 1975 to 1985, have left a legacy of thousands of villagers forcibly uprooted from their lands, homes and culture. These peoples have been, and are still, suffering physical, economic and psychological damage. The repression included the massacres of over 400 children, women and men who refused to move.

Over the past twenty years, members of the InterReligious Task Force brought the appalling conditions occasioned by the dam project to the attention of the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Guatemalan government. Our letters vigorously denounced the effect of the dam project on the local people and demanded that, at the very least, adequate compensation be provided for them.

To this day, the Guatemalan Government, the World Bank and the IDB refuse to acknowledge their responsibility for the damage inflicted on those affected by the Chixoy Dam. On the contrary, the authorities are using penal and legal systems as tools of repression.

On September 7, 2004, over 1,000 members of the Mayan-Achi communities peacefully protested the human rights violations incurred during construction.

On September 8, 2004, the communities ended the protest after signing an agreement with the State Electricity Institute (INDE), government authorities and observers from the Procurator of Human Rights (PDH). The agreement set up a discussion whereby the damages and losses incurred by the Chixoy dam would be assessed.

On September 14, 2004, INDE representatives presented a complaint to the Public Prosecutor's Office against the leaders of the Coordinating Body of Communities Affected by the Chixoy Dam—the same leaders with whom they had signed the agreement.

On January 20, 2005, **Carlos Chen**, one of the leaders, was detained in Baja Verapaz on the trumped-up charges of making threats, causing bodily harm and threatening the security of the nation.

As of February 3, 2005, **Antonio Vásquez Xitumul**, another leader, was detained on charges of illegal detention and threats against Chixoy Dam operators, breaking and entry into INDE property, actions against state property and actions against the internal security of the nation. There are pending capture orders against six other leaders of the Communities Affected by the Chixoy Dam.

These are politically motivated charges to block community efforts to demand reparations and compensation for loss and suffering due to the Chixoy Dam.

Carlos Chen and Antonio Vasquez Xitumul must be given full--not conditional--release immediate. The World Bank and the IDB (whose partial responsibility this very definitely is) and the Government of Guatemala have the duty to negotiate compensation and reparations in good faith

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Coordinator

Copies:

Minneh Kane, Asst. to President, World Bank ~ via fax: 1-202-522-1677  
Jane Holden, Asst. to President, World Bank~ via fax: 1-202-522-7700  
David de Ferranti, Vice-President, World Bank~ via email: [Ddeferranti@worldbank.org](mailto:Ddeferranti@worldbank.org)  
Carmen Gadala, External Affairs Officer, World Bank~ via email: [cgadala@worldbank.org](mailto:cgadala@worldbank.org)  
Jane Armitage, Country Director for Central America, World Bank~ via email: [Jarmitage@worldbank.org](mailto:Jarmitage@worldbank.org)  
Mario Marroquin, Guatemala City, World Bank~ via email: [mmarroquin@worldbank.org](mailto:mmarroquin@worldbank.org)  
Neeta Sirur, Country Manager for Guatemala, World Bank~ via email: [Nsirur@worldbank.org](mailto:Nsirur@worldbank.org)  
Irma Yolanda Avila, Civil Society and Indigenous Specialist, World Bank ~ via email: [iavilaargueta@worldbank.org](mailto:iavilaargueta@worldbank.org)  
Jorge Sapoznikow, Modernization of the State Division, IDB~ via email: [jorges@iadb.org](mailto:jorges@iadb.org)  
John Ferriter, Public Relations Officer, IDB~ via email: [johnfe@iadb.org](mailto:johnfe@iadb.org)  
Oscar Berger Perdomo, President of the Republic of Guatemala ~ via fax: 011-502-2221-4423 / 2239 0090  
Lic. Frank LaRue, Presidential Human Rights Commission, Guatemala~ via email: [copredeh@guate.net](mailto:copredeh@guate.net)  
Ambassador Jose Guillermo Castillo, Embassy of Guatemala ~ via fax: 1-202-745-1908  
Martha Doggett, UN Department of Political Affairs ~ via email: [doggett@un.org](mailto:doggett@un.org)  
Ambassador John Hamilton ~ via fax: 011 502 334 8477  
Courtney Turner, Guatemala Desk ~ via fax: 1 202 647 2597  
Senator George Voinovich, US Senate ~ via email: [Daniel\\_knezevic@voinovich.senate.gov](mailto:Daniel_knezevic@voinovich.senate.gov)  
Rep. Dennis J. Kucinich, US House of Representatives ~ via email: [Samantha.spinney@mail.house.gov](mailto:Samantha.spinney@mail.house.gov)  
Rep Marcy Kaptur, US House of Representatives ~ via fax: Jennifer Goedke 202.225.7711  
Rep Steve LaTourette, US House of Representatives ~ via email: [kate.ostrander@mail.house.gov](mailto:kate.ostrander@mail.house.gov)  
Rep Tim Ryan, US House of Representatives ~ via email: [john.Stephan@mail.house.gov](mailto:john.Stephan@mail.house.gov)  
Rep Stephanie Tubbs Jones, US House of Representatives ~ via email: [tannaz.haddadi@mail.house.gov](mailto:tannaz.haddadi@mail.house.gov)

Chixoy Dam\_ GHRC\_ Guatemala

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