

Minister of Agriculture, Guatemala: Ing. Alvaro Aguilar Fax: 011 502 2472 4302	President of the Republic of Guatemala: Licenciado Oscar Berger Perdomo Fax: 011 502 2239 0090
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May 13, 2006

Dear Sirs:

We are shocked and outraged at the forced eviction on April 6 of 400 indigenous peasants living and working on the San José La Moca coffee farm, in the municipality of Senahu, Department of Alta Verapaz. They were evicted by 200 police officers and 80 soldiers.

The peasants are now forced to live by the side of a nearby road without any access to clean water, food or shelter. Many are becoming ill and developing skin conditions from contaminated water. They no longer have land to grow food; some are showing signs of malnutrition.

These farm workers are among 800 families who have been living on the farm all their lives. They have been in a labor dispute with the farm owners since 2002. They were forcibly evicted on February 1. Security forces beat some of them, used tear gas, and burned their shelters.

On February 3, when four members of the community tried to collect water, they were shot and wounded by the farm's security guards. Manuel Federico Cu Bol, Gerardo Bol, Domingo Caal and Matias Chpe Tox have gone into hiding. Some of the security guards were also wounded in the incident.

All of this is in direct violation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) to which Guatemala is a party and therefore obliged to ensure that "evictions should not result in individuals being rendered homeless or vulnerable to the violation of other human rights." **We urge that you**

- immediately provide the evicted families with suitable and safe accommodations, food, water and access to medical attention until such time as their dispute with the farm's owners is resolved;
- ensure just and fair resolution of the labor dispute between the community of San José la Moca and the farm owners and make the results public;
- carry out an impartial and thorough investigation into the shooting incident of February 3, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

CC: Ambassador Jose Guillermo Castillo ~ via fax
 Ambassador James Derham ~ via fax
 Courtney Turner, Guatemala Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax
 Oficina de la Pastoral Social, Diocesis de Coban, Alta Verapaz ~ via fax
 Attorney General Juan Luis Florida ~ via fax
 Minister of the Interior Carols Vielman ~ via fax
 US Senators DeWine & Voinovich ~ via email
 US Reps Brown, Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

UA 101_06 Guatemala

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