

via fax: 011 502 2253 0801 Sr. Eduardo Stein Barillas Vice President of Republic of Guatemala	via fax: 011 502 2251 2218 Juan Luis Florido Attorney General of Guatemala
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February 13, 2007

Dear Sirs:

We are greatly concerned about the safety of the staff members of the Human Rights Defenders Protection Unit (UPDDH), the National Movement for Human Rights (MNDH) and the Association for Communication of Art and Peace (COMUNICARTE) whose Guatemala City offices were broken into on February 5, 2007. Thirteen computers were stolen containing information on human rights violations and mining issues and operational details of the member organizations of MNDH. Paper files, cameras, projectors, money, and master tapes of COMUNICARTE's entire document collection were stolen. At 8:40am, while staff members were waiting for the police to arrive, an individual drove by in a red Toyota Corolla, leaned out the window and filmed staff and the building.

Previous investigations show that members of clandestine groups have been responsible for similar attacks and raids. These groups are criminal networks involving the business sector, private security companies, common criminals, gang members and possibly ex- and current members of the armed forces who have embedded themselves within the state structure and use their positions and contacts to control lucrative illegal activities and guarantee immunity from prosecution. Perpetrators of intimidation and death threats to UPDDH staff on May 11 and 15, 2006 still have not been brought to justice.

It is also relevant to note that UPDDH had planned to release on February 5 its 2006 report on attacks against human rights defenders: 14 killings and 278 attacks in 2006.

In light of the recent break-in and theft, **we strongly urge you to:**

- initiate an immediate and thorough investigation into this incident, fully publicize the results, and bring those responsible to justice;
- investigate the death threats and intimidation of UPDDH reported in May 2006 and bring those responsible to justice; and
- defend the right of human rights defenders to carry out their activities without restriction or fear of reprisals, as set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Thank you for your prompt attention.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

Copies: Human Rights Protection Unit ~ via fax: 011 502 2232 2651
 José Guillermo Castillo, Guatemalan Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 1 202 745 1908
 James Derham, US Ambassador to Guatemala ~ via fax: 011-502-2334-8477
 Courtney Turner, Guatemala Desk Officer, US Department of State ~ via fax: 202-647-2597
 Paolo Carozza, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: (202)458-3992
 U.S. Senators Brown and Voinovich ~ via email
 U.S. Representatives Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Sutton, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

UA_137_06 Update_Guatemala

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