

Minister of the Interior of Guatemala Carlos Vielman Fax: 011 502 2362 0237	Attorney General of Guatemala Juan Luis Florido Fax: 011 502 2251 2218
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February 15, 2007

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned for the safety of the team of lawyers and other staff at CALDH, the Center for Legal Action on Human Rights. **Francisco Soto, Angelica Gonzalez, Otto Navarro, and Jennifer Echeverria** provide legal support to people seeking justice on behalf of relatives killed in massacres during Guatemala's internal armed conflict. We believe their lives may be in grave danger.

On February 2 at 12pm a colleague of Angelica Gonzalez was forced at gunpoint by two men to lie down on the floor in the back of his car. They drove for about 20 minutes and then left him in the Guatemala City suburb of Colonia Primero de Julio. When the car was found a few hours later, all of his belongings, including his checkbook and laptop, were found inside, showing that the motive had not been robbery.

On February 5 at 4pm, Angelica Gonzalez found a following threat stuck to her car: "protect yourself...tell Pancho [Francisco] to look after himself, his children and wife...look for other jobs if not one of these days we'll take you out to lunch as always it'll be on us...get it into your heads sons of bitches." Her car had been parked in front of the office of the Presidential Commission on Human Rights, where she had been attending a meeting.

Also on February 5, at 1pm, Otto Navarro found that one of his tires had been slashed while his car was parked outside a photocopy shop in a car park with security guards.

Actively investigating human rights violations, CALDH brought the case of the 1982 Plan de Sanchez massacre before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and achieved a 2004 ruling against the Guatemalan state, which was ordered to apologize and pay compensation to survivors. (Vice-President Eduardo Stein made the apology on July 18, 2005, but compensation has still not been made.) Since October 2006 CALDH has been involved in the legal proceedings against former military officers, including former Head of State General José Efraín Ríos Montt, whose arrest and extradition has been requested by a Spanish court for crimes against humanity.

Over the past several years, we have written several letters urging protection for CALDH staff. We are concerned about the deteriorating security for human rights defenders in Guatemala: in 2005, 3 were killed and 214 attacked; in 2006: 14 were killed and 278 attacked.

In light of these facts, we strongly urge you to thoroughly and immediately investigate threats against the team of lawyers and staff of CALDH, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice. We remind you that human rights defenders have a right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals.

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
 Paolo Carozza, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: (202)458-3992
 US Senators Brown & Voinovich ~ via email
 US Reps Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Sutton, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

UA 32/07 Guatemala

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