

via fax: 011 502 2411 9124/9326 Juan Luis Florido Attorney General of Guatemala	via fax: 011 502 413 8658 Ing. Carlos Roberto Vielman Montes Minister of Interior and Justice of Guatemala
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March 21, 2007

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned for the safety of Leonardo Ramírez, a member of the Committee of Peasant Unity (CUC) and President of the New San José las Lagrimas Association in Esquipulas, Chiquimula Department. He has been working on behalf of peasant farmers threatened with eviction, has been the victim of numerous acts of intimidation and has been told of a plot to kill him.

On February 9, several armed men arrived at his house on the San José las Lagrimas farm; one went into the house to ask his wife where he was while the others remained hidden in bushes 500 meters away. On February 19, an acquaintance from another community told him that he should be careful because he had heard that there were people tracking him who could kill him. On February 24, one of his relatives was approached by a man known to have links to the army and was told that anyone who killed Leonardo Ramírez would receive 500 quetzales for Ramírez's head.

We believe that other members of the New San José las Lagrimas Association are also in danger. Our concern is supported by the recent murders of several other peasants' rights activists, among them **Vicente Ramírez López**, who, on February 13, was killed when he and three others were attacked on the farm by four armed men. The rural workers managed to catch two of the gunmen, who claimed the army had sent them, and handed them over to the police. The two men were later imprisoned, but have since been freed. Other Association members who have been killed are **Matías Hernández** (December 14) and **Israel Carías Ortiz** and his two children, aged nine and ten (February 6).

In light of these facts, we strongly urge you to **order an immediate and thorough investigation into the intimidation of Leonardo Ramírez and into the February 13 killing of Vicente Ramirez, and to bring those responsible to justice.**

We have written several letters to Guatemalan authorities in recent years, urging an end to human rights abuses against members of CUC in Izabal, Quiché and Suchitepequez Departments. We remind you of your obligations to recognize the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders and their right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals. Such rights are set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Be assured that we will see to it that our elected officials here in the United States are made aware of human rights violations in Guatemala.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

- Copies: Comite de Unidad Campesina (CUC) ~ via fax: 011 502 2434 9500
 Ambassador Jose Guillermo Castillo, Guatemalan Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202 745 1908
 Ambassador James Derham, US Ambassador to Guatemala ~ via fax: 011-502-2334-8477
 Courtney Turner, Guatemala Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202-647-2597
 Paolo Carozza, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.6002
 US Senators Brown & Voinovich ~ via email
 US Representatives Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Sutton, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

UA 49/07 Guatemala

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