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July 5, 2005

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are very concerned for the safety of the **Union of Education Workers of Guatemala (STEG)** following the raid on their office between the evening of June 25 and the morning of June 27. The secretary of the union discovered the break-in at 9:00 A.M. on Monday, June 27 when he arrived at his office to begin work. The door that opens to the street had been forced open and the intruders left clear signs of intimidation.

On the walls and on the desks the intruders painted red crosses, presumably to symbolize death. They also painted red crosses on the organization's posters against the privatization of education, on posters with the name of STEG, and on posters with images of important leaders of the movement. Material losses included the theft of a computer containing extensive information on the National Assembly of Teachers' programs and its plans for the future as well as the history of its programs and plans from 1989 to the present. Two other computers were destroyed. Red paint was spilled on all the files and papers were also destroyed. A desk drawer containing money was left open but the money was not stolen.

This is the most recent of intimidating and threatening actions against STEG personnel since the beginning of 2005. In March, when STEG joined other groups in demonstrating against the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), unidentified vehicles began to park outside the organization's offices in an attempt to monitor the staff's activities or intimidate those inside the building. STEG's work has also included opposition to the Law of Concessions which concerns privatization of public resources and, as a member of the Labor and Popular Action Unity (UASP), STEG is involved in a lawsuit against Guatemala's President, Vice-President, Defense Minister, Interior Minister, and Chief of Police for the extrajudicial execution of Juan López in Colotenango, Huehuetenango in March of this year. Also, as part of UASP, STEG has publicized official documents confirming massive tax evasion by many powerful individuals. Members of STEG, including Secretary General Joviel Acevedo, have received serious death threats recently.

In the light of these threats and intimidations, **we strongly urge you to:**

- Take all necessary means to guarantee the right of STEG members to carry out their work and to ensure the safety of all their members;
- conduct an immediate and thorough investigation into the recent raid on their office as well as earlier intimidations and threats against their members, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice.

Thank you for your prompt attention to these matters.

For Peace With Justice,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

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