

via fax: 011 502 2411 9124 <b>Juan Luis Florido</b> Attorney General of Guatemala	via fax: 011 502 413 8658 <b>Adela Camacho de Torrebiarte</b> Minister of the Interior of Guatemala
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May 12, 2007

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned for the safety of **Abelardo Roldan**, Regional Coordinator of the Committee of Peasant Unity (Comite de Unidad Campesina – CUC). We are also concerned for the safety and welfare of **Leonardo Ramirez**, a member of the CUC and President of the New San José las Lagrimas Association in Esquipulas, Chiquimula Department, as well as for that of other members of this Association.

On April 18, armed men attempted to abduct Abelardo Roldan from a meeting with government representatives at which they discussed land allocation to the San José las Lagrimas community. At about 4 PM, five armed men entered and asked for Abelardo. Another 15 armed men waited outside the building. Fortunately, community members and government representatives stopped the armed men from dragging Abelardo outside. Abelardo Roldan left with the government representatives in their private plane. More armed men were seen in two cars.

We believe that other members of the New San José las Lagrimas Association are also in danger. This is supported by the recent murders of several other peasants' rights activists, among them **Vicente Ramirez López**, who, on February 13, was killed when he and three others were attacked on the farm by four armed men. Other Association members who have been killed are **Matias 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 April 18 attempted abduction of Abelardo Roldan, the February 13 killing of Vicente Ramirez, the December 14, 2006 killing of Matias Hernández, and the reported threats to the life of Leonardo Ramirez, and bring those responsible to justice;
- take immediate steps to guarantee the safety of all of those involved in the negotiation process to settle the San José las Lagrimas land dispute;
- ensure the speedy resolution of the outstanding land dispute issues affecting the San José las Lagrimas community.

We have written several letters to Guatemalan officials to protect CUC members over the past few years. CUC members and leaders have been intimidated and killed in the departments of Izabal, Suchitpequez, Retalhuleu, and Quiché. Most of these abuses have resulted from CUC's advocacy for peasant land rights.

We remind you of your obligations to recognize the legitimacy of the activities of CUC members and other human rights defenders in Guatemala.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

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 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 and US Representatives Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Sutton, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

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