

via fax 011 502 2251 2218 <b>Licenciado Oscar Berger Perdomo</b> Presidente de la República de Guatemala	via fax: 011 502 251 2218 <b>Juan Luis Florido</b> Fiscalía General del Ministerio Público
via fax 011 502 2362 0237 <b>Carlos Vielman</b> Ministro de Gobernación	

August 23, 2005

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are extremely concerned for the safety of **FRANCISCO SANCHEZ MENDEZ**, a member of Children for Identity and Justice against Oblivion and Silence (HIJOS), who was threatened with death in a call to his home by an unidentified man on August 19 between 10:15 and 10:30 P.M. The threat was made only twenty-four hours after Sánchez returned from Caracas, Venezuela, where he had traveled as a member of the Guatemalan delegation to the XVI World Student and Youth Festival Against Imperialism and War. HIJOS has been active in protests against the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA).

This threat follows an attempted abduction of Sanchez on May 7 and several intimidations this year of HIJOS, an organization whose members aim to recover the historical memory of their relatives killed or disappeared by the army during the armed conflict and to denounce the army's abuses. In February, the office was broken into and files, photographs, and computers stolen, while other items of value were left behind. On May 19, we wrote to about the May 11 raid of the HIJOS office; information about the organization and its members was stolen, while, again, objects of value — including a brand new laptop computer with nothing on its hard drive — were left behind.

These acts are occurring systematically, in spite of protective measures ordered by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) of the Organization of American States. HIJOS has called on government authorities to stop the open aggression by parallel groups toward members of HIJOS and their work, to respect the orders issued by the IACHR, and to expedite the investigation of the break-ins at their office, stalled without reason in the Human Rights Public Prosecutor's Office.

**We strongly urge you, the Guatemalan authorities, to**

- investigate the death threat received by Francisco Sánchez Mendez and to prosecute those responsible;
- ensure the safety of Sánchez and all other members and associates of HIJOS;
- thoroughly investigate the break-ins at the HIJOS office earlier this year and prosecute those responsible;
- remember that failing to protect human rights workers by investigating attacks or threats against them is a violation of the Peace Accords in which the government agreed to “take special measures to protect those persons or entities working in the field of human rights and to investigate, in a timely and exhaustive manner, any complaint it may receive relating to acts or threats that may be directed at them.”

For Peace With Justice,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Coordinator

Copies: Ambassador José Guillermo Castillo ~ fax: 1 202 745 1908  
 Ambassador John Hamilton ~ fax: 011 502 334 8477  
 Courtney Turner, Guatemala Desk ~ via fax: 1 202 647 2597  
 U.S. Senators DeWine and Voinovich ~ via email  
 U.S. Representatives Brown, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

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