

via fax: 011 502 2362 0237; 011 502 2361 5657

**Carlos Vielman**

Ministro de Gobernación de Guatemala

via fax: 011 502 2251 2218

**Juan Luis Florido Solis**

Fiscal General de la Republica de Guatemala

November 11, 2005

Dear Sirs:

We are concerned for the safety of lawyer **Romeo Monterrosa Orellana, his wife and his two daughters**, aged 10 and 11. He is representing Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo (GAM, or Mutual Support Group, a non-governmental human rights organization) in state prosecution proceedings.

GAM is charging the owner of the El Corozo farm with the murder of eight farm workers who were shot dead during protests against the land owner on January 24, 2005. Police were present but took no action. Families of the victims have withdrawn their charges under pressure from the landowner. Judge José Victor Bautista Orozco was withdrawn from the case in April 2005; he was murdered a few days later. Romeo Monterrosa is also representing the farm workers who claim ownership of the Colonia La Catorze farm on the coast in Puerto San José. The farm was sold to a Panamanian company in 1996, despite the Constitutional prohibition on non-Guatemalans owning property within 15km of the country's borders, including its coastline. The notary public who authorized the deal is now the Solicitor General.

Romeo Monterrosa and his family have been the subject of recent threats and intimidation.

- September 30: While at a meeting in the Solicitor General's office to discuss land rights cases, he received a text message on his mobile phone: "...you are going to pay...with what you love most." Romeo Monterrosa fears that this means his daughters. Two days earlier his wife was followed to work by a pick-up truck.
- October 8, night: There was an unsuccessful attempt to break into Romeo Monterrosa's office.
- October 16, between 4 and 5 pm: Romeo's wife received three text messages that appeared to come from his mobile phone, urging her to get in touch with him. She contacted him, but Romeo had not sent any messages.

We urge you to:

- take immediate measures to protect Romeo Monterrosa and his family, in accordance with their wishes;
- carry out a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the threats and other acts of intimidation, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;
- take immediate measures to end the intimidation of those defending and supporting communities involved in land conflicts so that they can carry out their lawful activities without fear of intimidation.

Thank you for your prompt attention to these concerns.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

Copies: Beatriz Ofelia De Leon Reyes, President of the Supreme Court ~ via fax: 011 502 2232 6626 or 011 502 2248 7116  
 Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo ~ via fax: 011 502 2220 0606  
 Ambassador Jose Guillermo Castillo ~ 1 202 745 1908  
 Ambassador James Derham ~ via fax: 011-502-2334-8477  
 Courtney Turner, Guatemala Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202-647-2597  
 US Senators DeWine & Voinovich ~ via email  
 US Reps Brown, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

UA 274/05 Guatemala

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