

via fax: 011 502 2221 4423/239 0090 President Oscar Berger Perdomo Presidente de la República de Guatemala	via fax: 011 502 2251 2218 Juan Luis Florido Fiscal General de la República / Attorney General
via fax: 011 502 2362 0237 Carlos Vielman Ministro de Gobernación/Minister of the Interior	

January 24, 2006

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned that on January 20, private security guards opened fire on protesters at the Nueva Linda finca in Champerico, Retalhuleu Department. At least three campesinos, **Roberto Gonzáles, Macario Gómez and Bernardo Guillén** were wounded.

Campesino leader Aparicio Pérez said that the protesters had conducted themselves peacefully at the entrance to the finca, "waiting only for justice." This incident is related to the violent eviction of workers from the finca in August 2004 (resulting in nine campesino and three police deaths) and the disappearance of finca administrator and campesino leader Hector Reyes (on September 5, 2003). Although there was sufficient evidence at that time against two of the finca's private security guards suspected of abducting and murdering Reyes, arrest warrants were never carried out.

According to the Nueva Linda Justice Group, on January 20 campesinos were "heading toward the finca peacefully, with nothing more than their calls for justice" about Reyes' disappearance and demanding that he be released alive. Security guards opened fire. The police arrived but refused to arrest them. Furthermore, there was no presence of the Human Rights Ombudsman (Procuraduría de Derechos Humanos, or PDH).

We have written Guatemalan officials on previous occasions about the violence at Nueva Linda (December 3, 2004 and February 23, 2005). We are disappointed that authorities have not put a stop to this conflict.

We urge that you

- conduct a full, immediate, and impartial investigation into the violence at Nueva Linda finca on January 20 and apply justice fully and impartially;
- prosecute those responsible for the forced disappearance of Hector Reyes;
- pursue justice in the killings that occurred during the Nueva Linda eviction in 2004, at least three of which were classified by the Human Rights Procurator as extrajudicial executions.

Thank you for your prompt attention to these concerns.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

Copies: Ambassador Jose Guillermo Castillo ~ via fax
 Ambassador James Derham ~ via fax
 Courtney Turner, Guatemala Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax
 Guatemala Human Rights Commission-USA ~ via fax
 US Senators DeWine & Voinovich ~ via email
 US Reps Brown, Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

GHRC_Nueva Linda_Guatemala

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