

via fax: 011 502 2251 2218 Licenciado Oscar Berger Perdomo President of Guatemala	via fax 011 502 2362 0237 Carlos Vielma Minister of the Interior
via fax: 011 502 251 2218 Juan Luis Forido Attorney General	

April 15, 2006

Dear Sirs:

We are very concerned about the army's violent eviction with tanks and helicopters on the morning of March 29 of 310 members of the Worker and Campesino Labor Federation (FESOC) from land they were occupying in the community of La Bendición, Flores, Petén Department. The army also burned homes and belongings and injured campesinos during the eviction.

The land where the campesinos were living had been reclaimed by the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP) as a protected area. The campesinos have been waiting for a year for CONAP to comply with its commitment to find suitable land for their relocation. As members of FESOC, the campesinos have also engaged in processes to resolve the land conflict peacefully, having presented the case to the Presidential Commission to Resolve Land Conflicts (CONTIERRA). In spite of these facts CONTIERRA was unable to stop the eviction.

The Agrarian Platform, of which FESOC is a member, has expressed support for the campesino group and is demanding that the government attend to the families who were evicted and to the persons who suffered injuries during the eviction. They have concluded that this recent eviction reveals the Grand National Alliance (GAN) administration's incapacity to resolve the agrarian conflict in the country and confirms the lack of political will in attending to the demands of campesino groups.

In light of these facts, **we strongly urge you to**

- respect your own processes for peacefully resolving land conflicts and limit the army's role to defending national borders, as mandated by the 1996 Peace Accords.
- investigate and punish the excessive use of force by the army
- compensate the campesinos for their injuries and losses.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

Copies:

- Ambassador José Guillermo Castillo, Guatemalan Ambassador to the US ~ fax
- Ambassador James Derham, US Ambassador to Guatemala ~ fax
- Courtney Turner, Guatemala Desk, US Department of State ~ via fax
- U.S. Senators DeWine and Voinovich ~ via email
- U.S. Representatives Brown, Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

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