

Via fax: 011-503- 2-243-9930

Señor Elías Antonio Saca
President of El Salvador

Via fax: +503 2249 8613

Lic. Félix Garrid Safie
Attorney General

August 12, 2007

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply distressed about the assassination of unionist **Miguel Ángel Vásquez** and the safety of other members of the Union of Electrical Sector Workers (STSEL). Miguel Vásquez, the finance secretary of STSEL, went missing on Tuesday, July 17 and was discovered the following day, assassinated with two bullets to the head. He was murdered in typical death-squad style.

Miguel Vásquez was highly respected by his colleagues and recognized as a responsible and committed trade union official dedicated to the defense of workers' rights and social justice.

A couple of years after the 1998 privatization of electricity distribution, which dramatically increased home electricity costs, the Salvadoran government arranged to begin selling off the rest of the national electrical utility (i.e. generation of electricity) to private firms. Privatization has meant higher rates, lower quality, less access, and less sovereign control over public services. STSEL has made several efforts to keep the electrical utility in public hands: the union went on strike, rallied the support of the community, and pressured elected officials, all while enduring government repression.

Members of STSEL have pointed out that the murder of their union member has occurred at a very difficult time for the union movement and people's social movements in El Salvador. There is increased political repression and tension surrounding the 13 political prisoners that are being charged under the new anti-terrorism laws. These political prisoners were arrested in Suchitoto on July 2 for protesting against the government's plans to privatize the public water system. (We wrote to Salvadoran officials about that case on July 15.) Moreover, in the last three years, various murders of political leaders and union leaders have occurred with complete impunity.

We urgently call upon your humanity and integrity to take the following actions:

- conduct a full and impartial investigation into the killing of Miguel Ángel Vásquez, make the results public, and bring those responsible to justice;
- assure that the Salvadoran government respect fundamental human and trade union rights, including the right to life, freedom of speech and freedom of association in conformity with international standards

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

Copies: Ambassador Charles L. Glazer, US Ambassador to El Salvador ~ via fax
Ambassador René Antonio Leon Rodríguez, Salvadoran Ambassador to the US ~ via fax
René Figueroa, Minister of the Interior and Governance ~ via fax
Paolo Carozza, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Organization of American States ~ via fax
Florentín Meléndez, El Salvador member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Organization of American States ~ via fax
Paul Degler, El Salvador Desk, US State Department ~ via fax
U.S. Senators Brown and Voinovich and U.S. Reps Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Sutton, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

El Salvador unionist assassination

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