



InterReligious Task Force on Central America  
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via fax: 011 502 2221 4423  
**Lic. Oscar Berger Perdomo**  
Presidente de Guatemala

via fax: 011 502 2251 2218; 2411 9124; 2411 9326  
**Juan Luis Florido**  
Attorney General of Guatemala

September 15, 2007

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are shocked at the assassination on August 17 of **José Emanuel “Pepe” Méndez Dardón**, father of seven-year old twins and son of prominent human rights defender **Amílcar Méndez Urizar**. Pepe Méndez was shot multiple times at close range as he was leaving his job at La Aurora International Airport in Guatemala City.

The day before he was assassinated, Pepe Méndez and his father had submitted an urgent communiqué to the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Human Rights Center at the request of Dr. Rafael Espada, a vice-presidential candidate who feared that his life was at risk. The communiqué described the overall level of violence that had occurred during the electoral campaign season in Guatemala. We, together with many in the international community, are concerned that the murder of Pepe Méndez is retribution for his – and his father’s – activism and was intended to intimidate others who stand up for human rights in Guatemala. In the past year, both Pepe and Amílcar Méndez had received a number of death threats directed against them as well as other members of their immediate family. Some of those threats occurred within the last month and were reported to Guatemala’s Human Rights Prosecutor.

In light of these facts and because of our concern for the increasing level of violence in Guatemala, especially against human rights defenders (136 attacks in the first six months of 2007), we **strongly urge** you to

- immediately order a thorough and impartial investigation into the assassination of José Emanuel “Pepe” Méndez, including the appointment of a special prosecutor, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;
- facilitate the full participation of the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in the investigation, as previously committed by the United States Ambassador to Guatemala, James M. Derham;
- include the Human Rights Ombudsman of Guatemala in all phases of the investigation in order to insure greater transparency, accountability, and protection for all members of the Méndez family, as well as others who have been similarly threatened.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Coordinator

cc: Ambassador Jose Guillermo Castillo ~ via fax: 202 745 1908  
Ambassador James Derham ~ via fax: 011-502-2334-8477  
Paolo Carozza US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights~ fax: 202 458 3992  
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Guatemala Human Rights Commission USA ~ via fax: 202.526.4611  
US Senators Brown & Voinovich ~ via email  
US Representatives: Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

CRLN & GHRC/Guatemala

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