

via Fax: 011 502 2239 0090 <b>Licenciado Oscar Berger Perdomo</b> President of the Republic of Guatemala	via Fax: 011 502 2251 2218 <b>Juan Luis Florido</b> Attorney General and Chief of Public Ministry of Guatemala
via Fax: 011 502 2422 2519 or 011 502 2422 2423 <b>Lic. Rodolfo Colmenares</b> Minister of Labor	

October 13, 2007

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are extremely concerned for the safety of the officers and members of SITRABI, the union for banana workers in Izabal Department. On Sunday, September 23, Marco Tulio Portela Ramírez, the secretary of culture and sport at SITRABI, was gunned down in front of his house by armed men, leaving behind his wife and young children.

We believe this killing is directly related to the work that the organization is doing to end the intimidation and harassment of their union. We are well aware of the fact that Marco's murder is only one of many instances of intimidation and violence against unionists in Guatemala. In 1999, seven members of SITRABI were violently attacked and forced to flee to the United States. In November 2006, union officer Cesar Guerra was shot at while driving a union vehicle, and others were threatened to cease and desist their activities. In July 2007, military forces forcibly entered a union meeting and demanded to know the identity of the leaders.

**Based on the facts presented above, we strongly urge that you**

- thoroughly investigate and prosecute the murderers of Mr. Ramírez and other trade unionists in Guatemala;
- take responsibility for the safety of the remaining leaders of SITRABI and ensure that they are protected from all violence and intimidation;
- publicly condemn the violence against Guatemalan trade unions.

We will be monitoring the news and update bulletins from labor rights organizations to ensure that this case is taken seriously and that labor unions are protected throughout Guatemala. In addition, we will be keeping our legislators in Congress aware of the situation.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai,  
 Coordinator

Copies:

- 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
- Courtney Turner, Guatemala Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202-647-2597
- US Senators Brown & Voinovich ~ via email
- US Representatives: 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:**