

via fax: 011 503 2 2443 7857/9930 Sr. Elías Antonio Saca President of El Salvador	Via fax: 011 503 2222 0655 Oscar Humberto Luna Ombudsman for the Defense of Human Rights
via fax: 011 503 2249 8613 Lic. Félix Garrid Safie Attorney General of El Salvador	

December 16, 2007

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned and outraged about the brutal attack on November 22 by the Salvadoran riot police (UMO) on the **community of Cutumay Camones**, in the province of Santa Ana. The community, in their ongoing resistance to the construction of a garbage dump, blocked the entrance of the construction site. Orlando Mena, Santa Ana's mayor, joined with Police Director Rodrigo Avila in sending more than 300 riot police to "dissolve the protest," attacking the community with tear gas fired from surrounding helicopters. Similar attacks occurred on September 15 and October 12.

William Alfredo Ventura, age 14, died from bronchitis and pneumonia complications provoked by the tear gas. Thirty-nine people, including children under the age of 18, were arrested and are under police custody.

The landfill is being built to comply with a law that requires that existing open air dumps be closed and all trash go to new "sanitary" landfills. The community is demanding an end to the construction of the garbage dump because this site is only 700 meters from a spring used by the 8000 residents for drinking water. The Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman (PDDH) has found that the site is located on an aquifer and recommended that another site be selected. In early September, Ombudsman Oscar Luna recommended that the Environmental Ministry "suspend the sanitary landfill project immediately" and asked Santa Ana Mayor Orlando Mena to take steps to protect the environment. Mena has pushed construction of the landfill forward even though the Environmental Ministry has not granted an operating permit or completed environmental studies of the location. The Court of Accounts declared that the contracting process between Santa Ana and the private business, Presys S.A., which will operate the landfill, was illegal.

We therefore **strongly urge** that you

- immediately release all community members detained on November 22;
- investigate the death of William Alfredo Ventura;
- investigate the series of irregularities in the concession of construction and operating permits that the Environmental Ministry awarded the private company Presys;
- Stop intervention by the National Civilian Police in the community because it should not serve the interests of a private company;
- Suspend construction of the garbage dump.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

cc: Charles L. Glazer, U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador ~ fax: 011-503-2501-2154
 Rene Antonio León Rodríguez, El Salvador Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 1-202-234-3834
 Paul Degler, El Salvador Desk at U.S. State Dept. ~ fax: 202-647-2597
 Paolo Carozza US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights~ fax: (202)458-3992
 Florentín Meléndez, El Salvador member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights~ fax: (202)458-3992
 U.S. Senators Brown and Voinovich and U.S. Representatives Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Sutton, Tubbs Jones ~ via email
 CISPES 11/27 El Salvador

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