

via fax 011 502 2382 8390 Lic. Alvaro Colom Caballeros President of the Republic of Guatemala	via fax: 011 502 7760 4350/ 7760 4355/ 7760 1051 District Attorney Fiscalia Distrital San Marcos, Guatemala
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April 14, 2008

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force on Central America, are extremely concerned for the safety of **Monseñor Alvaro Leonel Ramazzini Imeri**, bishop of the Catholic Diocese of San Marcos and President of the Guatemalan Bishops Conference. At 11am on March 31, a member of the diocese who works closely with Bishop Ramazzini was approached by a grey pick-up truck while walking in San Marcos. An unknown man, wearing a hat and sunglasses, left the truck, grabbed the worker's arm, showed a handgun and said "tell that priest not to get involved in things that do not concern him; his days are numbered." When the diocesan worker named a particular priest who works in the area and asked the man if that was who he meant, the man responded, "I am talking about Ramazzini." He then pushed the worker with the tip of his gun before getting back in the truck and driving away.

Bishop Ramazzini has been threatened in recent years for his support of *campesinos* (peasants) protesting Goldcorp's destructive mining operations in San Marcos, about which we wrote to Guatemalan officials on February 23 and July 18, 2005. Bishop Ramazzini has supported rural communities in his diocese in conflicts over land use has raised the profile of the human rights of migrants.

Bishop Ramazzini knows that church officials are not immune from assassination. Bishop Juan Gerardi, who headed the Catholic Church's "Recovery of the Historical Memory" (REMHI) report, *Guatemala: Never Again*, a history of the three decades of human rights violations during the country's civil war, was assassinated April 26, 1998, just two days after the report was issued.

In light of the current death threats described above, we **strongly urge you** to:

- take all necessary precautionary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological security of Monseñor Alvaro Ramazzini, his family, and those who work with him in the Diocese and Department of San Marcos;
- investigate and apply the rule of law in Guatemala against the perpetrators of the threats described above, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;

We remind you that human rights defenders such as Bishop Ramazzini have the right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Thank you for your prompt attention.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

cc: Bishop Alvaro Ramazzini, Diocese of San Marcos ~ via fax: 011 502 7760 3743
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
Guatemala Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202-647-2597
US Senators Brown & Voinovich and US Representatives Kaptur, Kucinich, Latta, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

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