

Via Fax: 011 502 2239 0090 Álvaro Colom Caballeros President of the Republic of Guatemala:	Via Fax: 011 502 2411 9124, 011 502 2411 9326 Lic. Juan Luis Florido Fiscal General de la Republica y Jefe del Ministerio Publico
Via Fax: 011 502 2248 3020 Sr. Orlando Blanco Secretario Presidencial para los Derechos Humanos y la Paz (SEPREDEHPAZ)	

July 15, 2008

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are deeply distressed over the kidnapping and physical violence that is being used to intimidate members of the Guatemalan human rights organization, Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice against Oblivion and Silence (**HIJOS**). Around 3.30pm on June 21, two men got out of a grey pick-up truck and grabbed an HIJOS volunteer who was walking along a road in Guatemala City. One of the men said: "...tell HIJOS to stop messing around because we'll get tired and we'll have to kill you... We have you all on video...." The man then hit the HIJOS member twice in the stomach and ran away with his accomplice.

June 21 is the Guatemalan National Day for the Victims of Enforced Disappearance. HIJOS organized a number of public events on that date because they were founded as a voluntary organization in 1999 by youths who lost relatives during Guatemala's internal armed conflict (1960-1996). HIJOS is also part of a coalition of organizations challenging the celebration of National Army Day in Guatemala (June 30). On June 8, the government announced that the military parade had been cancelled because of budgetary constraints. Days later, a pro-military non-governmental organization said that they would go ahead with their own parade. An article in a Guatemalan newspaper on June 15 said that HIJOS were responsible for the cancellation of the official parade because they hate the Army.

We believe the lives of all members of HIJOS may be at risk because of the attack on the HIJOS volunteer on June 21 and the false reports about HIJOS. They have previously been the target of threats, intimidation and office raids. To our knowledge, no one has been brought to justice for these incidents.

We there **fore strongly urge** you to

- take immediate and effective measures to guarantee the safety of all HIJOS members, in accordance with their wishes;
- order an immediate, swift, impartial and full investigation into the death threat against a HIJOS member on June 21, make the results public and to bring those responsible to justice;
- ensure the human rights defenders their right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Coordinator

cc: HIJOS ~ via email  
Ambassador Jose Guillermo Castillo, Guatemalan Ambassador to the US ~ via fax  
Ambassador James Dirham, US Ambassador to Guatemala~ via fax  
Guatemala Desk, US State Department ~ via fax  
Paolo Carozza, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights~ fax: (202)458-3992 ~ via fax  
US Senators Brown & Voinovich ~ via email  
US Representatives Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Regula, Ryan, Sutton, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

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