

Via Fax: 011 502 2221 4423/2238 3579 Lic. Alvaro Colom President of Guatemala	Via Fax: 011 502 2413 8658 Francisco Jose Jimenez Irgaray Minister of the Interior of Guatemala
Via Fax: 011 502 2411 9124 Lic. Jose Amilcar Velasquez Zarate Attorney General and Head of Public Prosecutor's Office	

September 16, 2008

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned for the safety of **Yuri Melini**, age 46, Director of the Center for Environmental, Social and Legal Action (CALAS). We believe that **his family** and **his colleagues at CALAS** are also in grave danger. On September 4 at 7:30am as Yuri Melini left his car and was walking towards a house of a relative in Zone 7, Guatemala City, a man standing nearby called to him, caught his attention, and fired at him four times, hitting him in the stomach, right knee and left leg.

We believe this attack is linked to his role at CALAS and its recent work in a number of high profile environmental issues, including a legal challenge to the law that permits opencast mining for gold and other metals and campaigning against contamination of water sources and against occupation of land in nature reserves. This attack is further evidence of efforts to prevent environmental activists from carrying out their legitimate activities to protect the natural environment and the human rights of indigenous and peasant communities whose livelihoods depend on the environment. We have written you many times about such threats and attacks, including our letter of January 24, 2007 concerning attacks and acts of intimidation on Carlos Albacete Rosales and Piedad Espinosa Albacete of Trópico Verde in the Petén region.

These human rights defenders have a legal 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.

Therefore, we **strongly urge that you**

- make every effort to ensure that immediate measures are taken and maintained to guarantee the safety of Yuri Melini in strict accordance with his wishes;
- order an immediate, thorough and swift investigation into the attack on him, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

cc: Centro de Accion Legal—Ambiental Y Social de Guatemala ~ via US mail
Francisco Villagran de Leon, Guatemalan Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202-745-1908
Stephen McFarland, US Ambassador to Guatemala ~ via fax: 011-502-2334-8477
Paolo Carozza, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights~ via fax: 202-458-3992
Guatemala Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202-647-2597
US Senators Brown & Voinovich ~ via email
US Representatives Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Regula, Ryan, Sutton ~ via email

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