

via fax: 011 502 221 44 23 Alvaro Colom Caballeros President of Guatemala	via fax: 011 502 2411 9124 Jose Amilcar Velasquez Zarate Attorney General of Guatemala
via fax: 011 502 2422 2519/2423 Edgar Alfredo Rodriguez Minister of Labor of Guatemala	via fax: 011 502 2289 1555 x 104936 Agua Pura Salvavidas Castillo Brothers Corporation

October 25, 2008

Dear Sirs:

We are outraged at the harassment and ill treatment of **members of the Peten Distributor Employees Union (SITRAPETEN)**. In early May, a group of employees of Agua Salvavidas, a purified water distribution company owned by the Castillo Brothers Corporation, was illegitimately fired. SITRAPETEN was formed in February 2007 to strengthen employees' bargaining position in demanding compliance with Guatemalan labor laws . After being rejected on five separate occasions by the Ministry of Labor, it was officially approved in May of this year.

On May 3, the company declared bankruptcy and insisted that union members resign. Non-union members were told that they would be transferred to other companies. Legal procedures for declaring bankruptcy were not followed by the company. SITRAPETEN members refused to sign the letter of resignation and set up an encampment outside the company's headquarters to defend their right to organize, protest their dismissal and demand reinstatement. All SITRAPETEN's attempts to draw attention to their situation and defend their right to organize have been met with harassment, intimidation and violence. Members have been physically attacked by security guards, received intimidating phone calls and have seen cars with tinted windows and without license plates circling their encampment.

We are aware that the treatment of SITRAPETEN members reflects a national pattern of rising attacks against unions in Guatemala. **We therefore urge that you**

- act to guarantee the safety of the SITRAPETEN affiliates and other trade unionists facing threats and intimidation;
- protect the right to free association and other labor rights as stipulated in Guatemalan and international law;
- comply with commitments to uphold labor rights standards as stipulated in the DR-CAFTA negotiated with the United States and the association agreement between Central America and the European Union.

Thank you for your prompt attention.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

CC: Dr. Sergio Fernando Morales Alvarado, Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH) ~ via fax: 011 502 238 1734
Lic. Ruth del Valle, President Human Rights Commission (COPREDEH) ~ via fax: 011 502.2334. 0119
SITRAPETEN ~ via fax: 011 502.2251.8091
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 and US Representatives Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Regula, Ryan, Sutton ~ via email

NISGUA&LEAP/ Guatemala

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