

via fax: 011 502 2411 9124 Lic. José Amilcar Velásquez Zarate Attorney General and Head of Public Prosecutor's Office, Guatemala	via fax: 011 502 2413 8658 Salvador Gandara Minister of the Interior, Guatemala
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February 4, 2009

Dear Sirs:

We are horrified at the killing of **Amado Corazon Monzon**, one of the leaders of the Movement of United Vendors of the Streets of Coatepeque in the Department of Quetzaltenango and of **Armando Sánchez**, independent lawyer assisting the vendors' movement. Unknown men killed Amado Monzon with three shots to the head as he was opening his grocery shop around 6am on January 12. His death may have been related to a dispute with the local government over the relocation of the municipal market. Street vendors allege that the relocation of the market will jeopardize their jobs. They also argue that the site chosen for the new market is polluted and constitutes a hazard to their health.

On December 23, 2008, unknown men shot lawyer Armando Sánchez four times and killed him as he was parking his car. His killing took place moments after a meeting during which he had been assisting the representatives of the vendors' movement in negotiations with the local government. On December 21, during a speech broadcasted on two local radio stations, the mayor of Coatepeque is reported to have said "the vendors will have a nice surprise on the 23rd or 24th." We believe that approximately 20 other leaders of the street vendors' movement are also at risk.

The conflict over the future location of the municipal market dates back to 1993 and involves more than 5,000 street vendors. Several eviction orders have been issued and the vendors have filed injunctions against such orders. Some vendors have protested violently on occasions. In October 2008, the national government decreed the state of emergency in Coatepeque.

We **strongly urge** you to

- order a swift, full and impartial investigation into the killings of street vendors' leader Amado Corazon Monzon and lawyer Armando Sánchez;
- ensure that immediate, effective and appropriate measures are taken to guarantee the safety of the leaders of the informal vendors' organizations, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- guarantee the right of human rights defenders 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: Street Vendors' Movement of Coatepeque ~ via U.S. 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
Skye Justice, Guatemala Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202-647-2597
US Senators Brown & Voinovich ~ via email
US Representatives Boccieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Sutton, Wilson ~ via email

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