

via fax: 011 502 2413 8658 Sr. Salvador Gandara Minister of the Interior of Guatemala	via fax: 011 502 2411 9124 Lic. Jose Amilcar Velasquez Zarate Attorney General & Head of the Public Prosecutor's Office
via fax: 011 502 2424 1714 Dr. Sergio Morales Alvarado Human Rights Ombudsman	

March 2, 2009

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force on Central America, are extremely concerned for the safety of **Manuel Calel Morales and his relatives**. Manuel Calel is the coordinator of the Guiding Association that Leads the 'Land of Maize' People (Kamal B'e Rex Tinamit Ixim Ulew). At about 8:30am on February 17, an unknown man kidnapped a relative of Manuel Calel at gunpoint as she was leaving her home in a village in Quiché Department, took her to a deserted area, beat her and attempted to rape her. He said, "You're going to pay for all [Manuel] is doing there in your town" and threw her, head first, into a well that was approximately eight meters deep. He made a telephone call telling someone that he had the girl. The man had left by the time the girl managed to escape. On the same morning, between 9:00 and 9:30am, Manuel Calel received a call on his mobile phone. The male caller, presumably the attacker, said twice, "here I've got [name of the girl]" and hung up. Two days later Manuel Calel received three calls from a man who refused to give his name, asked about the girl, and then hung up.

Since the 1980s, Manuel Calel and his colleagues have denounced the killings, enforced disappearances and other human rights violations committed by the paramilitary Civil Defense Patrols against indigenous people during the internal armed conflict (1960-1996). On February 16, he filed a formal complaint before the local Public Prosecutor's Office against criminal gangs now operating in his neighborhood. Some former Civil Defense Patrol members are also believed to be associated with these criminal gangs.

In light of these facts, we **strongly urge** you to:

- take immediate steps to provide effective protection to Manuel Calel Morales and his relative who was attacked, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- order a swift, full and impartial investigation into the kidnapping, beating, attempted rape and attempted killing of Manuel Calel's relative, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;
- uphold 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.

Thank you for your prompt attention.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

copies: Manuel Calel Morales c/o UDEFEGUA (Unit for the Defense of Human Rights Defenders of Guatemala) ~ 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 that you take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: