

via fax: 011 502 2413 8658 <b>Lic. Raul Antonio Velasquez Ramos</b> Minister of the Interior of Guatemala	via fax: 011502 2411 9326 <b>Lic. José Amilicar Velasquez Zarate</b> Attorney General and Head of Public Prosecutor's Office of Guatemala
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January 1, 2010

Dear Sirs:

We are gravely concerned for the safety of trade unionist **Jorge Chen Alvarez**, an official in the National Health Workers' Union in the town of Poptun, Petén Department. On November 29 at 7am he found a written death threat in a plastic bag in his garden in front of his house. The message, which included a painted skull, read: "Jorge we are giving you 15 days to leave if not what happened to Carlos will happen to you. Death is looking for you."

Jorge Chen believes that this threat is related to his work as the union's Secretary on Conflict Resolutions, in which he attempts to resolve disputes between staff and management. In recent meetings with the Poptun hospital director, he requested, on behalf of the union, that there be a review of medical services for pregnant women. Through their work, the union has managed to prevent the abduction of two newborn babies and persuaded the police to provide security for the hospital.

On December 1, Jorge Chen filed a complaint with the police about the death threat. To our knowledge, the police have not yet provided him with any form of protection or made any arrests in connection with the threat.

Members of other branches of the union in the Petén have also reported death treats and acts of intimidation. On May 12 we wrote to Guatemalan officials regarding threats against Edgar Neftaly Aldana Valencia, Secretary General of the San Benito branch of the National Health Professionals' Union, and his wife.

Because we believe Jorge Chen's life is in grave danger, **we strongly urge you to:**

- take immediate steps to provide effective protection for him, in strict accordance with his wishes;
- order a prompt, full and impartial investigation into the death threat, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- support and reinforce the work of trade unionists and human rights activists working for improvements in maternal health and infant mortality.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Coordinator

cc: National Health Professionals' Union ~ via fax: 011-502-2232-9289  
 Francisco Villagran de Leon, Guatemalan Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202-745-1908  
 Stephen McFarland, US Ambassador to Guatemala ~ via fax: 011-502-2332-4993  
 Brett Hamsak, Guatemala Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202-647-2597  
 Paolo Carozza, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202-458-3992  
 US Senators Brown & Voinovich ~ via email  
 US Representatives Bocchieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Space, Sutton, Wilson ~ via email

UA329/09/Guatemala

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