

via fax: 011 503 2523 7171/2243 9390/7857 <b>Rodolfo Delgado</b> Attorney General's Organized Crime Unit, El Salvador	via fax: 011 503 2523 7402 or 2523 7171 <b>Romeo Benjamin Barahona</b> Attorney General of El Salvador
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January 3, 1010

Dear Sirs:

We are very saddened and outraged at the murders, during the last week of December 2009, of two community activists in Cabañas Department. On December 20, **Ramiro Rivera Gómez**, vice-president of the Environmental Committee of Cabañas (CAC), was assassinated in the Trinidad neighborhood of Ilobasco by hitmen carrying M-16 rifles. His **thirteen-year old daughter** was injured and his neighbor **Felicita Echeverria** was killed.

Ramiro Rivera was a local leader in the community struggle against the environmentally-destructive El Dorado gold mining projects which Pacific Rim, a Vancouver, B.C.-based company, is desperate to open, despite widespread community and governmental opposition. On August 7 Ramiro Rivera was shot 8 times, but survived the vicious attack (see our letter of Sep 21, 2009). Protective measures since his recovery, by two police officers from the Witnesses and Victims Protection Unit of the National Civilian Police, was ineffective on December 20.

On December 26, **Dora "Alicia" Sorto Recinos**, another CAC anti-mining activist in the small Trinidad community, was killed after doing laundry at a nearby river. She was eight months pregnant. Her **two-year old child** whom she was carrying was also shot in the leg. Sorto Recinos' life partner, **José Santos Rodríguez**, a board member of CAC, has received a number of recent death threats and survived three separate attempts against his life.

Community organizing efforts have successfully blocked Pacific Rim's attempts to obtain gold mining permits, but the company has filed a lawsuit against the Salvadoran government under the U.S.-Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) for hundreds of millions of dollars in damages. Despite the increasing frequency and political overtones of the violent acts described above, local police authorities and the former attorney general's office have classified these cases as "common crimes." Community members believe that until these cases are thoroughly investigated for political motives and the perpetrators brought to justice, impunity against the mining resistance movement in Cabañas will continue.

Therefore, we **strongly urge** that you:

- complete the recommendation of the Ombudsman in Defense of Human Rights to create a special team with the National Civilian Police to investigate these murders and threats against environmental activists.
- investigate the cases exhaustively and impartially and bring the intellectual and material authors of the crimes to justice.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Coordinator

cc: President Mauricio Funes ~ via fax: 011-503-2243-7857 or 2243-9930 or 011-503-2243-9947  
 Robert I. Blau, Charge d'Affaires, US Embassy, El Salvador ~ via fax: 011-503-2501-2154  
 Francisco Altshui Fuentes, Charge d'Affaires, US Embassy, El Salvador ~ via fax: 202-232-3763 or 202-234-3834  
 Paolo Carozza, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202-458-3992  
 Florentín Meléndez, El Salvador member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202-458-3992  
 Douglas Kraft, El Salvador Desk, US Dept. of State ~ via fax: 202-647-2597  
 Oscar Humberto Luna, Prosecutor for Defence of Human Rights ~ via fax: 011-503-2222-0655  
 US Senators Brown & Voinovich and US Representatives Boccieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Sutton, Wilson, Space ~ via email

CISPES12/29/09/ElSalvador

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