

Via fax: 011 502 2411 9124 <b>Lic. Jose Amilcar Velasquez Zarate</b> Attorney General and Head of the Public Prosecutor's Office of Guatemala	Via fax: 011 502 2413 8658 <b>Lic. Carlos Menocal</b> Minister of the Interior of Guatemala
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April 4, 2010

Dear Sirs:

We, members of the InterReligious Task Force, are deeply distressed over the intimidation, attacks, and threats directed at three members of the staff of the Unit for Protection of Human Rights Defenders–Guatemala (UDEFEGUA), a human rights non-governmental organization in Guatemala City. UDEFEGUA monitors, verifies, and accompanies human rights defenders at risk in Guatemala.

On the morning of March 5, two unidentified men in a black car with tinted windows broke into the house of **Erenia Vanegas**, a UDEFEGUA staff member, while she and her family were out. When they came home, they found that a window and the locks on front doors were broken and cupboards in some of the bedrooms and a box containing documents had been searched. Because nothing, including money in full view, was stolen, it appears that this is one more incident attempting to intimidate UDEFEGUA into discontinuing their work.

On February 2, **Claudia Samayoa**, Coordinator of UDEFEGUA, noticed that her car hood was open and the battery had been tampered with. When she began driving, she realized that the pedals of the car were covered in oil, causing her foot to slip and for her to briefly lose control. The car had no oil leaks; further investigation showed that the oil on the pedals was not any kind usually found in a car. Claudia Samayoa believes that her car was sabotaged with the intention of causing an accident and has reported this to police.

Between April 30 and May 3, 2009, Claudia Samayoa, Erenia Vanegas and a third staff member, Luisa Piñeda, received more than 30 text message threats to their mobile phones. (cf our letter of May 25, 2009.) These threats have been reported to police, but it is not known who is behind the threats or any of the recent incidents. UDEFEGUA staff are still not safe to do their work, and we believe their lives are in danger.

Therefore, we again **strongly urge** you to

- conduct an independent, thorough and impartial investigation into the threats and acts of intimidation against members of UDEFEGUA, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;
- take immediate steps to provide efficient and thorough protection to members of the staff of UDEFEGUA, in accordance with their wishes;
- approve and implement a protection program for human rights defenders for which civil society organizations and state agencies presented a draft to the Minister of Interior in 2008.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Coordinator

cc: UDEFEGUA ~ via fax: 011 502 2254 5840  
 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  
 Dinah Shelton, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights~ via fax: (202)458-3992  
 Brett Hamsak, Guatemala Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202-647-2597  
 US Senators Brown & Voinovich ~ via email  
 US Representatives Bocchieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Space, Sutton, Wilson ~ via email

UA54/10/Guatemala

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