

Via fax: 011 502 2251 2218/2411 9124/2411/9326

Licda. Maria Encarnación Mejía García de Contreras
Acting Attorney General of Guatemala

September 26, 2010

Dear Madam:

We are saddened and outraged at the death of 32-year old Maya Kaq'chikel teacher and artist, **Leonardo Lisandro Guarcax**. Leonardo, a Mayan spiritual guide, director of a school in Chuacruz, Sololá Department, and coordinator for the Sotz'il Jay Cultural Center, was kidnapped en route to work on August 25. His tortured body was found the next day.

Leonardo was a promoter and researcher of pre-Hispanic art through theater, music, and Kaq'chikel dance, and a tireless promoter of indigenous art at the national level. He founded a new indigenous youth movement who promote the art of the Mayan people.

In May 2009, two of Leonardo's family members, Jesús Ernesto and Carlos Emilio Guarcax González, who also worked at the Sotz'il Jay Cultural Center, were killed. Acts of intimidation in the village of El Tablón, Sololá, have been occurring since 2008. Delinquent groups and kidnapping gangs present in the region are destroying the culture and liberty of the people. Several human rights defenders have filed reports denouncing their crimes. However, the crimes remain unsolved and the perpetrators enjoy impunity despite several months of investigation.

Therefore **we strongly urge** that you

- immediately and thoroughly investigate the murder of Leonardo Lisandro Guarcax, the murder of his two family members and the acts of intimidation since 2008 in El Tablón, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice;
- provide immediate protection for indigenous rights defenders who have been threatened and attacked.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

cc: 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
Christopher Webster, Director US Department, Office of Central American Affairs ~ via fax: 1 202 647 4087
US Senators Brown & Voinovich ~ via email
US Representatives Boccieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Space, Sutton, Wilson ~ via email

GHRC/USA/9/27/10

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