

Via fax: 011.502.2411.9124
Dr. Claudia Paz y Paz Bailey
Attorney General of Guatemala

Via fax: 011.502.2413.8658
Lic. Carlos Menocal
Minister of Interior of Guatemala

February 25, 2011

Dear Madam and Sir:

We are horrified at the **murders of Catalina Mucú Maas, Alberto Coc Cal and Sebastian Xuc Coc, three indigenous Maya Qeq'chi human rights defenders** from the Quebrada Seca community, Izabal Department. On February 12 they left their boat at a dock in Rio Dulce after a two hour trip to attend university classes there. At 2:30pm, after Alberto Coc Cal and Sebastian Xuc Coc had left from lunch at a nearby café, an unknown man asked for them there. After finishing classes at 5:00, they were joined by a friend, **Amilcar Choc**, and started their return home. There was no contact with them following a mobile call by Catalina Mucú Maas to her relatives telling them she was coming back.

At 2:00pm on February 13, community members found the boat with several bullet holes, traces of blood and the students' backpacks. On February 14 they found the floating bodies of Alberto Coc Cal, Catalina Mucú Maas and Sebastian Xuc Coc in the same area where the boat had been docked. On February 15, the body of their friend, Amilcar Choc, was found 1 km away. All had been shot numerous times.

The three students were affiliated with Encuentro Campesino (Peasant Encounter), a peasant and indigenous rights organization. Sebastian Xuc, 30 years old and the father of five children, was a middle school teacher in Quebrada Seca and active in community controlled development to bring much needed resources to families in the area. Catalina Mu, 23 years old, was the first woman from Quebrada Seca to graduate from high school and the first woman to become a spiritual guide for Ak' Tenamit, a large local organization working to promote harmony between q'eqchi' and western culture. She was an outspoken advocate for women's rights and their participation in decision-making. Alberto Coc, 26 years old and the father of three children, may have been the main target of the attack. He was a spiritual guide and an active leader in Encuentro Campesino, which political prisoner Ramiro Choc helped to form in 2008. February 14 was the first day that Choc became eligible for release from prison, and the three were expected to participate in activities to pressure for his freedom. Alberto and several other Encuentro Campesino leaders had recently received death threats.

This massacre is the latest in hundreds of violent attacks against q'eqchi' communities by police, military and paramilitary soldiers (cf our letter of 1/13/11). Therefore we again **strongly urge** that you

- conduct an independent, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of the four individuals described above, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;
- take immediate steps to provide appropriate protection to the Quebrada Seca community.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

CC: UDEFEGUA ~ via email
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 Hamsik, Guatemala Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202-647-2597
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Renacci, Ryan, Sutton ~ via email

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