

via fax: 011 502 2413 8658 Lic. Carlos Menocal Minister of the Interior of Guatemala	via fax: 011 502 2413 7007 Ing. Juan Alfonso De León Minister of Agriculture of Guatemala
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April 3, 2011

Dear Sirs:

We are outraged at the killing of indigenous farmer **Antonio Beb Ac**, the **forced eviction** of 2500 indigenous farmers, and the **pending eviction** of another 300 from the indigenous Q'eqchi' communities in the Valle del Polochic, municipality of Panzós, Alta Verapaz Department.

These Q'eqchi' campesinos have been living and working in 14 settlements for 30 years, although a local company disputes the ownership of the land. On February 7, a local judge issued an eviction order against these communities. On March 14 there was a meeting with the authorities to try to settle the dispute. However the community was not told that the eviction process was to start the following day.

On March 15, the police and the army used teargas to forcibly evicted families from *Miralvalle* farm following a failed mediation effort between the community and the authorities regarding the possibility of harvesting some crops before leaving. Antonio Beb Ac, a member of the community, was killed and two people suffered from health complications because of the teargas.

On March 16, the police and the army evicted *Quinich* farm; there are reports that the houses were set on fire. On March 17, six more farms were evicted: *Rio Frio*, *Bellaflor*, *Ocho de Agosto*, *Los Recuerdos*, *Paraná*, *Santa Rosita*. On March 18, *El Sauce*, *Las Tinajas* and *Semau* farms were evicted. Approximately 60 more families (300 people) from the communities of San Miguelito and Campanas are also at risk of forcible eviction.

The evicted communities of about 2500 people have no shelter or access to food and water. Guatemala is a party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). These evictions are a blatant violation of that Covenant, which obliges Guatemala to ensure that "evictions should not result in individuals being rendered homeless or vulnerable to the violation of other human rights."

Based on the facts presented above, **we urge that you**

- guarantee that there will be no further evictions carried out until Guatemala complies with its obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
- carry out an impartial and thorough investigation into the death of Antonio Beb Ac, make the results of the investigation public, and bring those responsible to justice.

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: 011-502-2331-2348
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 and Portman ~ via email
US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Renacci, Ryan, Sutton ~ via email

UA 83/11/Guatemala

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