

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
via fax: 011 502 2411 9124 Claudia Paz y Paz Bailey Attorney General of Guatemala	

July 5, 2011

Dear Sirs and Madam:

We continue to be outraged at the violence being waged against indigenous 14 Q'eqchi' farming communities in the Valle del Polochic, municipality of Panzós, Alta Verapaz Department. In previous letters we have demanded justice for the killing of indigenous farmer Antonio Beb Ac (our letter April 3) and Óscar Reyes (our letter June 11). Now there has been another assassination: community leader **María Margarita Chub Che**. The violence is being instigated by the Chabil Utzaj sugar company, with the support and participation of the Guatemalan government.

Since our letter of April 3, there has been more violence waged against these Q'eqchi' campesinos who have been living and working in 14 settlements for 30 years:

May 13: Three private helicopters flew over the community of Aguacaliente, dropping grenades on the cornfields. Farmers who had gathered there, hoping to harvest the corn to feed their families, were forced to flee for their lives.

May 21: A small group of families from the community of Canlún approached operators of tractors belonging to Chabil Utzaj to inquire why they were excavating a hole in a nearby field. Eighteen armed security guards under the direction of Chabil Utzaj employees Jorge Mario Barrientos y Efraín García intercepted the farmers and told them that the hole being dug was their grave. The guards opened fire. Three people were injured and one, Óscar Reyes, a father of three, bled to death from his gunshot wounds.

June 4: María Margarita Che Chub Che, a 37-year-old community leader from Paraná, was shot and killed (in the presence of her two young children) in her home by heavily-armed hit men on a motorcycle.

June 13: Thirty-five families in the village of Punto 15 were threatened by the mayor, Ricardo Rumbler. He told them to leave the land immediately, and if they didn't, he wouldn't be responsible if anyone was killed. He added: "You know how the company operates." Despite the fact that Punto 15 is on public, untitled land, the mayor claimed that it was private property; he is acting on behalf of the company to displace the indigenous population.

June 14: Tractors arrived in Punto 15, but the families have decided to resist the illegal eviction, despite the intimidation of the mayor and the sugar company.

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 deaths of Antonio Beb Ac, Oscar Reyes and María Margarita Chub Che, make the results of the investigation public, and bring those responsible to justice;
- protect the relatives of the deceased victims, in accordance with their wishes;
- urge authorities to transfer the case of María Margarita Chub Che to the Public Prosecutor's Unit for Women

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

CC: UDEFEGUA: Unidad de protección a defensores y defensoras de derechos humanos ~ via email
 Francisco Villagran de Leon, Guatemalan Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202 745 1908
 Stephen McFarland, US Ambassador to Guatemala ~ via fax: 011-502-2331-2348
 Dinah Shelton, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights~ via fax: (202)458-3992
 Siobhan Sheils, Guatemala Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202-647-2597
 Christopher Johnson, Diplomacy Desk Officer for Central America ~ via email
 US Senators Brown and Portman and 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: