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| <p>via fax: 011 502 2221 4445 Ing. Alvaro Colom Caballeros President of Guatemala</p> | <p>via fax: 011 502 2413 7007 Ing. Juan Alfonso De León Minister of Agriculture of Guatemala</p> |
| <p>via fax: 011 502 2411 9124 Claudia Paz y Paz Bailey Attorney General of Guatemala</p> | <p>via fax: 011 502 2413 8658 Lic. Carlos Menocal Minister of the Interior of Guatemala</p> |

August 16, 2011

Dear Sirs and Madam:

We continue to be outraged at the violence being waged against 14 indigenous Q'eqchi' farming communities in the Valle del Polochic, Panzós municipality, Alta Verapaz Department. The violence is being instigated by the Chabil Utzaj sugar company, with the support and participation of the Guatemalan government. Now there has been another attack.

On August 10, security guards attacked the rural community of Paraná. A group of around 30 security guards, carrying rifles, arrived at midnight, shouting: "Set it on fire, shoot!". They opened fire. **Three people received bullet wounds:** a man was shot in the stomach; an elderly man's leg was grazed by a bullet, as was a nine-year-old girl's foot. The guards also looted homes and set crops and five homes on fire. Police later found about 50 spent rifle cartridges.

Evictions of the Q'eqchi' farming communities began on March 15, when the police and the army used teargas to forcibly evict families from *Miralvalle* farm; community member Antonio Beb Ac was killed. On March 16, the police and the army evicted *Quinich* farm. 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.

Since the March eviction from the Paraná community, 22 families (about 140 people) have been living by the roadside in the area. After the attack on August 10, community members ran to hide in nearby fields.

This violence must stop immediately. In previous letters we have demanded justice for the killing of indigenous farmer Antonio Beb Ac (our letter April 3), Óscar Reyes (our letter June 11) and community leader María Margarita Chub Che (our letter July 5).

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

- order an impartial and thorough investigation into injuries suffered by the three community members at Paraná, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice;
- provide protection for all community members in the Valle del Polochic, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- make COPREDEH (the Presidential Commission for Human Rights) comply with the Precautionary Measures issued on June 20 by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to protect the indigenous Q'eqchi' communities of Panzós, and offer humanitarian assistance, including food and shelter, to those displaced by the evictions.

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 249/11_Guatemala

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