

via fax: 011 502 2221 4445 Ing. Alvaro Colom Caballeros President of Guatemala	via fax: 011 502 2411 9124 Claudia Paz y Paz Bailey Attorney General of Guatemala
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September 1, 2011

Dear Sir and Madam:

We are writing out of deep concern for the safety of the staff at the Center for Environmental, Social and Legal Action (CALAS) who have received death threats. On August 29, **Yuri Melini** and **Rafael Maldonado**, the director and legal advisor at CALAS received envelopes, each containing the same documents: a threat, papers from the Office of the Comptroller General and mug-shot photos of 18 men. The latter appeared to have been taken from police files.

The note read: Get whoever you want arrested and keep doing the show you want... We will set our records straight after 14-01-2012 (the first day of the new President's term. It's going to be a problem for those who come next and you're going to stop making a fuss". It also warned, "Rafel Maldonado you (must) feel like a winner [...] Yuri, Yuri don't you learn that life must be lived peacefully".

In recent months, members of the staff at CALAS have promoted a public campaign against corruption and the building of a gas plant in a nature reserve in Punta de Manabique, Izabal Department. They have also filed a complaint with the Constitutional Court on the case and lobbied for the dismissal, on the grounds of corruption, of a civil servant responsible for management of nature reserves. It seems clear to us that the threats and attempts at intimidation referred to above are a consequence of these actions by CALAS.

Based on the facts presented above, we urge that you

- Order an independent, thorough and impartial investigation into the threats made against CALAS staff, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Take immediate steps to provide full and appropriate protection to Rafael Maldonado, Yuri Melini and other CALAS staff members in accordance with their wishes;

As we're sure you are aware, the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders states that human rights defenders have a right to carry out their activities without any unfair restrictions or fear of reprisals. You have the power to see that these rights are protected. We strongly urge you to use that power to its full extent.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

Copies: CALAS ~ via fax; 011:502 247 44545
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 Officer for Central America, US State Dept. ~ via email
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Renacci, Ryan, Sutton ~ via email

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