

| | |
|--|---|
| Via fax: 011 502 2411 9124 Claudia Paz y Paz Bailey Attorney General of Guatemala | Via fax: 011 502 2413 8658 Lic. Carlos Menocal Minister of the Interior of Guatemala |
|--|---|

September 25, 2011

Dear Madam and Sir:

We are outraged at the killing of **Byron Arreaga**, a trade unionist who was shot to death in Quetzaltenango, the capital of Quetzaltenango Department, on September 13. As he left his house to drive to work, two unknown individuals shot him twice in his stomach and twice in his head. He died before he could reach his car.

Byron Arreaga was an administrative worker and a member of his office's trade union, the Trade Union of Administrative Workers for the Second Property Registrar (SITRASEREPRO). The trade union, founded in February 2010, has campaigned against corruption, including a three-week strike during August 2011 which led to the dismissal of the director.

This murder is further evidence of the dangerous conditions facing trade unionists campaigning for labor rights. On May 26, 2010, Idar Joel Hernandez Godoy, a finance secretary in the Izabal banana workers' union SITRABI, was shot several times by unknown assailants on a motorcycle. On October 28, 2010, Mateo López, a trade unionist, was shot in Catarina, San Marcos Province (cf our letter of 11/22/10).

We believe that Byron Arreaga was targeted because of his trade union activities. We are concerned for the safety of his fellow trade unionists. Therefore, we **strongly urge** that you

- carry out an independent, thorough, and impartial investigation into the killing of Byron Arreaga, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;
- take immediate steps to provide all necessary protection to the members of SITRASEREPRO, in strict accordance with their wishes.

We again remind you that human rights defenders, including trade union leaders, have the right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups, and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

cc: UDEFEGUA: Unity of Protection for Human Rights Defenders ~ 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
Siobhan Sheils, 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 283/11_Guatemala

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