

via fax: 011 502 2239 0090  
**Sr. Otto Pérez Molina**  
 President of Guatemala

via fax: 011 502 2334 0119  
**Sra. Ruth del Valle Cobar**  
 President of Presidential Commission on Human Rights (COPREDEH)

February 4, 2012

Dear Sir and Madam:

We are alarmed and deeply concerned about the hunger, illness, insecurity, and violence currently impacting the **Maya Q'eqchi' communities of the Polochic Valley, municipality of Panzós, Alta Verapaz Department**, who were victims of forced displacement in March 2011. Thousands of men, women and children continue to live in precarious conditions without the basic human needs of food, health, shelter, security and work.

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. During 2011 we wrote five letters about this crisis to several government officials, including the former President of Guatemala and the Presidential Commission for Human Rights (cf letters of Apr 3, June 11, July 5, Aug 16, Oct 25). To date, there has been no response. In June 2011, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights granted precautionary measures for the evicted communities and requested that the Guatemalan government act to prevent a humanitarian disaster. We are concerned about how little progress the government has made. So far there have been only two deliveries of food aid, which were vastly insufficient.

The lack of governmental action will have deadly consequences for these indigenous communities. At least one infant has already died due to complications resulting from malnutrition, and hundreds of other children are at risk. In addition, community members continue to suffer threats, intimidation, and physical violence. On January 5, security forces, with national police and military protecting them, brought in several tractors to tear up hundreds of hectares of subsistence crops. Security forces also attacked two community members with machetes as police and soldiers stood by and watched.

We are outraged that the communities' rights to food security, health services, housing, physical integrity, due process, and freedom of movement, and other human rights, continue to be violated. Your government must do everything possible to guarantee the rights of those affected.

Therefore we **strongly urge** that you

- fully implement the precautionary measures granted by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to prevent further malnutrition, sickness, starvation, and death of families who have nowhere to farm;
- end the violence and intimidation directed at members of the affected communities;
- investigate fully the recent deaths of community members Antonio Beb Ac, Oscar Reyes, and María Margarita Che Chub, and bring those responsible to justice;
- provide land nearby on which the members of the Polochic communities can live and plant their crops;
- cease any further forced land evictions, and work with agrarian communities to find just, nonviolent, and sustainable solutions to land conflicts, in compliance with the State's international human rights obligation.

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  
 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 and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Renacci, Ryan, Sutton ~ via email

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