

# IRTF

## InterReligious Task Force on Central America

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via fax: 011 502 2411 9210  
**Estimada Sra. Fiscal General  
Claudia Paz y Paz Bailey**  
Attorney General of Guatemala

via fax: 011 502 2413 8658  
**Sr. Ministro  
Mauricio Lopez Bonilla**  
Minister of the Interior of Guatemala

April 16, 2012

Dear Madam & Sir:

We are outraged at the massacre on the streets of Guatemala City that targeted **Luis Ovidio Ortiz Cajas**, a public relations secretary of the Executive Committee of the National Trade Union of Health Workers (SNTSG), and left four people dead, including Ovidio Ortiz.

At about 8:30pm on March 24, Luis Ovidio Ortiz Cajas entered a shop where a group of men was playing cards outside. A young man with a 9mm pistol got out of a white sedan automobile and shot Ovidio Ortiz twice in the head and six times in his upper torso. Three of the card players were killed. Bildave Santos Barco, a farmer, was shot twice in the head and died instantly. Fredy Leonel Estrada Mazariegos and Oscar Alexander Rodriguez Lima died later in the hospital. Two other men were wounded.

SNTSG, the trade union of which Ovidio Ortiz was a member, has campaigned for many years on issues of corruption in the management of the country's public health facilities. In December 2010 they filed an official complaint against the previous Minister of Health, accusing him of corruption. On March 22, 2012 the trade union's executive committee reached an agreement with the Ministry of Labor regarding seniority-based annual pay rises for health sector employees.

We believe Ovidio Ortiz is the latest victim targeted for trade union activities:

May 26, 2011: Idar Joel Hernandez Godoy, a finance secretary of the SITRABI banana workers union

September 13, 2011: Byrona Arreaga, a member of Trade Union of Administrative Workers for the Second Property Registrar (SITRASEREPRO) was killed in Quetzaltenango

February 5, 2012: Miguel Angel González Ramírez, became the 7<sup>th</sup> SITRABI member murdered in less than a year; he was shot dead while holding his infant son after he returned home from a football game.

Because other trade union members may be in grave danger, we **strongly urge** you to:

- order an independent, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing on March 24 of Luis Ovidio Ortiz Cajas, Bildave Santos Barco, Fredy Leonel Estrada Mazariegos, and Oscar Alexander Rodríguez Lima, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- take immediate steps to provide all necessary protection to SNTSG members, in 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 Human Rights Defenders.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

CC: STNSG ~ via email  
Francisco Villagran de Leon, Guatemalan Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202 745 1908  
Arnold A. Chacon, US Ambassador to Guatemala ~ via fax: 011-502-2331-2348  
Dinah Shelton, Chair, 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

UA 95/12 Guatemala

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