

via fax: 011 502 2411 9210 Estimada Sra. Claudia Paz y Paz Bailey Attorney General of Guatemala	via fax: 011 502 2334 0119 Estimado Sr. Carlos Morales, Executive Director Presidential Commission for Human Rights, Guatemala
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July 15, 2012

Dear Attorney General Paz y Paz Bailey & Director Morales:

We are deeply disturbed by the recent reports that several members of an indigenous peoples' organization have been physically attacked and threatened in recent weeks in northern Guatemala. One member was killed. The others remain at risk.

The Council of K'iche' Peoples (Consejo de los Pueblos K'iche', CPK) is an organization based in Santa Cruz del Quiché in the department of Quiché that works on indigenous peoples' rights, extractive industries and corruption issues. **Aura Lolita Chávez** is one of its leaders.

On July 4 CPK organized a peaceful demonstration against discrimination, alleged economic mismanagement and abuse of power by the mayor. At 4:15pm, after the demonstration, participants were returning to their community by bus when their vehicle was stopped by a group of eight people, armed with stones, pocket knives, machetes and batons. As the group threw stones at the bus, several CPK members got off it to see what was happening. The group asked where Aura Lolita Chavez was and violently attacked two women and a girl who participated in the demonstration. The women reported a knife wound and a fractured ankle.

Previously, on June 27, **Gaspar Tipaz**, CPK member and local leader, had received phone calls threatening him to death. A male caller asked him about the number of people who were going to attend a demonstration planned for June 28 and told him "tomorrow I'm going to kill you."

Weeks earlier, on June 12, **José Tavico Tzunun**, another CPK leader, was killed by armed gunmen who raided his house at night. The house was a meeting point for CPK activists.

Based on these facts **we strongly urge** that you

- take immediate steps to provide appropriate protection to members of the executive committee of the CPK, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- call on the authorities to order an independent, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of José Tavico Tzunun, and the threats and attacks against CPK members;
- remember that human rights defenders have a right to carry out their activities without any unfair restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the UN Declaration of Human Rights Defenders.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

CC: Consejo de los Pueblos K'iche' ~ 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, Rapporteur for Guatemala, 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: