

<p>via fax 011 502 2334 0119                  Sr. Antonio Arenales Forno, Director Ejecutivo                  COPREDEH: Presidential Commission on Human Rights,                  Guatemala</p>	<p>via US mail  <b>Dr. Sergio Fernando Morales Alvarado</b>                  Chief Ombudsman for Human Rights                  Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman, Guatemala</p>
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February 16, 2013

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned about the recent violence in the community of **San Antonio Las Trojes 1**, San Juan Sacatepéquez Municipality in Guatemala Department, and the assault on **Daniel Pascual** of the Campesino Unity Committee (CUC) and international visitors.

On January 23 fifty workers, armed with machetes, escorted heavy machinery from the Cementos Progreso cement factory to the community. They informed the community that drilling was to begin on a large well for potable water. An overwhelming majority of the people oppose the project because of the contamination it brings to the air and water. Local leaders have repeatedly questioned the project for its lack of transparency and the absence of prior consultation with area families. The community residents, along with eleven others in San Juan Sacatepéquez, have suffered violence and repression since 2006 because of their opposition to the company's activities in the area.

On January 24, a visiting verification commission headed by Daniel Pascual of the Campesino Unity Committee (CUC), international accompaniers from Peace Brigades International and independent journalists were assaulted by armed supporters of the cement company. That night, individuals wearing ski masks blocked the entrance to the community of Las Trojes to prevent local leaders from returning to their homes and families.

Since January 28 more than 5,000 people have maintained a daily, nonviolent protest in front of the cement factory to denounce the acts of violence and intimidation, and to demand that their rights be respected. The municipality of San Juan Sacatepéquez recently published a press release on their website which falsely accuses Daniel Pascual and Peace Brigades International of fostering "anarchy, lawlessness, fear and anxiety" in the area.

**We strongly urge that you**

- guarantee the security and well-being of the community members of San Juan Sacatepéquez;
- recognize the right of residents to protest in defense of their land, the right to a clean and healthy environment, and the right to be consulted in all projects that will affect their community; and
- immediately cease all false and inflammatory accusations, and focus on seeking a peaceful, negotiated solution to the conflict in Las Trojes.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Coordinator

Copies: 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, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

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