

via fax: 011.2239.0090 Exmo. Sr. Otto Pérez Molina President of Guatemala	via fax: 011 502 2251 2218/ 2411 9124/ 2411 9326 Sra. Claudia Paz y Paz Attorney General of Guatemala
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May 13, 2013

Dear President Pérez and Attorney General Paz:

We are seriously concerned about the defamatory statements against **Claudia Virginia Samayoa**, Coordinator of the Human Rights Defenders Protection Unit in Guatemala (UDEFEGUA), and the break-in at their offices in Nebaj in El Quiché Department.

On April 21, the Foundation Against Terrorism, an organization set up by former military officials and their supporters, accused Claudia Virginia Samayoa, in a 20-page document, of trying to blame the National Civil Police (PNC) for violent clashes with the local community. The document, entitled *The Farce of Genocide in Guatemala – a Marxist Conspiracy by the Catholic Church*, included a photo of Claudia Virginia Samayoa. She has previously been the victim of threats and defamatory statements accusing her of inciting violent clashes. (cf our letter of Nov 26 2012).

UDEFEGUA, which supports the work of human rights defenders through monitoring, verification and advocacy work, has been playing a key role in protecting witnesses who testified in the genocide trial of former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt. Because of ongoing threats, they had removed computers and documents from their office. On April 18 the office was broken into, and there was evidence that the perpetrators were searching for information and files. UDEFEGUA is awaiting further investigation into the break-in, which was reported to the police the day it occurred.

These incidents occur in a climate of violence and intimidation, including the killing and criminalization of defenders of the rights of indigenous peoples. We believe UDEFEGUA has been targeted for its legitimate work in the defense of human rights. Therefore, **we strongly urge** that you

- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the defamation against human rights defender Claudia Virginia Samayoa and the break-in at the offices of UDEFEGUA in Nebaj, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- investigate reports of killings, death threats and all forms of intimidation against human rights defenders and adopt immediate measures to ensure their protection;
- guarantee that all human rights defenders are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

cc: UDEEGUA ~ 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, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

Frontline Defenders 4/24/13_Guatemala

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