

via fax: 011-503-2281-5959 Sr. Benito Antonio Lara Fernández Minister of Justice and Public Security, El Salvador	via fax: 011 503 2221 2137 Comisionado Mauricio Ramírez Landaverde Director of the National Civilian Police, El Salvador
via fax: 011 503 2243 7857 Presidente Salvador Sánchez Cerén President of El Salvador	

October 24, 2014

Dear Sirs:

We are requesting an investigation into the violent shooting death of 23 year-old **Denis Vladimir Rivas Ramirez**, a student in Architectural Engineering at the University of El Salvador. Because neighborhoods and bus routes are controlled by armed gangs, residents of San Salvador face death threats, harassment, surveillance, extortion, and, as in the case of Denis Rivas, assassinations in their neighborhoods.

Denis had a bright future. In addition to his engineering course work, Denis was studying English at the Center for Exchange and Solidarity (CIS, a partner of our organization in Ohio). He had been admitted into the CIS scholarship program in Mejicanos, an impoverished suburb of San Salvador, because of his outstanding leadership qualities. Denis worked with the youth council of San Francisco de Asis Parish in Mejicanos (sister church of St. Peter Church in Kansas City, Missouri) to help guide youth at high risk of engaging in or being victimized by violence. In 2013 CIS sent Denis to Kansas City to represent the scholarship program. Denis' life was a symbol of hope for impoverished youth in high risk areas of the country.

On Tuesday, September 2, Denis stayed at the university after his classes to play soccer with fellow students and professors. He then went to the bus stop to travel home, but he never arrived. On September 3 his unidentified body, with bullets through the skull, was found on the road to Nejapa Power in Apopa, a different suburb of San Salvador, and registered at the local morgue at 3:40a.m. It is suspected that gang members took his identity card (DUI) and killed him because his address was that of a different gang zone. (Gang members kill people as part of their initiation and take the DUI as a trophy.) His family and fellow students identified his body the next day.

This incident shows how dangerous it is for San Salvador's residents to travel from one neighborhood to another. Armed gangs control various districts of San Salvador and the city's bus routes. They extort money from bus drivers and riders. They kill people who walk through neighborhoods where they don't reside.

These horrible and dangerous conditions are unacceptable. We therefore strongly urge that you:

- ensure a thorough investigation into the murder of **Denis Vladimir Rivas Ramirez**, DUI 04330069-3
- place security cameras on all public transportation
- reform the National Register of Natural Citizens to record a person's address on an electronic chip rather than written on the DUI

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator

copies: CIS ~ via email
 Mari Carmen Aponte, US Ambassador to El Salvador ~ via fax: 011-503-2501-2775
 Francisco Altshul, El Salvador Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 1-202-234-3834
 Martha Pacheco, El Salvador Desk at US State Dept. ~ via fax: 202-647-2597
 Christopher Johnson, Diplomacy Officer for Central America, US State Dept. ~ via email
 Rosa Maria Ortiz, Rapporteur for El Salvador, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

CIS 9/17/14 El Salvador

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