

via fax: 011 502.238.1734

Don Jorge Eduardo De León Duque
Prosecutor for Human Rights
Guatemala City, Guatemala

October 13, 2015

Dear Sir:

We are writing to express our deep concern regarding the death of **Sebastian Córdova Sajic**, age 70, in the village of Santa Abelina in El Quiché Department. He was a human rights defender and spiritual leader of the Ixil Maya indigenous people.

Sebastian Córdova Sajic was one of the few survivors of the genocide against the Ixil Maya community in the early 1980s by the government of former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt. Because of this he was a representative of his community before the National Redress Program. In this capacity, on September 10 he attended the presentation of a memorial in front of the offices of the National Redress Program in Nebaj in El Quiché Department, calling for integral and dignified reparation for the atrocities committed during the genocide. He was also a complainant in the legal case which was won against ENEL Green Power, in which it was confirmed that criminal activity had occurred during the installation of power lines connecting the hydroelectric dam Palo Viejo with the national grid.

On the evening of September 10, on his way home to San Antonio Tisach, Sebastian Córdova Sajic stayed the night in the village of Santa Abelina. He was found dead between 6 and 7am the next morning in nearby Xecibelaj with fatal head wounds, which appeared to have been inflicted by machetes.

The killing of Sebastian Córdova Sajic occurs in the context of the August 2015 postponement of the genocide trial against Efraín Ríos Montt, which is now scheduled to begin behind closed doors in January 2016.

We believe the death of Sebastian Córdova Sajic is due to his peaceful and legitimate work in the attainment of truth and reparation following the Guatemalan genocide. Therefore we **strongly urge** that you

- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of Sebastian Córdova Sajic, publish the results and bringing those responsible to justice
- take all necessary measures to guarantee the integrity and security of human rights defenders, particularly those in the Ixil and other Mayan communities, who are working towards justice in the genocide case
- guarantee in all circumstances 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
Co-Coordinator

copies: José Julio Alejandro Ligorria Carballido, Guatemalan Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202 745 1908
Todd Robinson, US Ambassador to Guatemala ~ via fax: 011 502 2331 2348
Thomas Lee, Guatemala Desk, US State Dept ~ via email LeeT2@state.gov
James Cavallaro, Rapporteur for Guatemala, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights~ via fax: (202)458-3992
Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3650
US Senators Brown & Portman
US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, 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: