

via email: aberger@mingob.gob.gt Sr. Enrique Antonio Degenhart Asturias Minister of the Interior of Guatemala	via email: TAldana@mp.gob.gt Lic. Thelma Esperanza Aldana Hernández Attorney General of Guatemala
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April 23, 2018

Dear Minister of the Interior Degenhart and Attorney General Aldana:

We are deeply troubled to learn that a group of hitmen killed **Crisanto Garcia Ohajaca** at a Holy Thursday Mass (Catholic worship service) on March 29. He is the uncle of Eugenio Ohajaca, the Executive Board Vice-President of the Coordination of Associations and Communities for the Integral Development of the Cho'rti People (COMUNDICH).

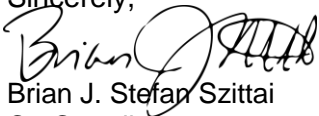
COMUNDICH is an indigenous rights organization that currently supports 48 Mayan Ch'orti' communities who live along the border with Honduras. They suffer from exceptional levels of poverty and malnutrition. The Ch'orti' de Morola community, who reside in the municipality of Camotán in Chiquimula Department, is being illegally pushed off their lands by means of violence and through a corrupt justice system. Large landholders in the area are requesting that the local administration acknowledge their claim to the land. COMUNDICH is pursuing lawsuits in national courts to have their communal property recognized and to restore their ancestral indigenous lands. Consequently, those involved with COMUNDICH have been the subject of threats and attacks. The leader of the Ch'orti' de Morola community, which COMUNDICH is currently assisting, received a death threat two days after Crisanto Garcia Ohajaca's murder. In the past few weeks threats and attacks against those associated with the indigenous rights organization have increased.

Crisanto Garcia Ohajaca was not involved in the legal proceedings for land restitution action. He was, however, likely targeted for his family links to COMUNDICH and his knowledge surrounding the killing of another member of the Ch'orti' de Morola community; Francisco Ohajaca Guzman was killed in 2010 for his work on indigenous land rights. Police from Camotán municipality visited the Ch'orti' de Morola community five hours after the murder and left the next day. The perpetrators have remained in the community as an act of intimidation, asking for the whereabouts of indigenous leaders. On March 31 a member of the Morola Land Council informed the indigenous leader of the Ch'orti' de Morola community that the hitmen responsible for Crisanto Garcia Ohajaca's murder were looking for him as well.

Because of our serious concern about the killing of Crisanto Garcia Ohajaca and acts of intimidation and threats carried out against members of indigenous community Ch'orti' of Morola we **strongly urge** that you

- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of Crisanto Garcia Ohajaca and the threats and acts of intimidation against members of COMUNDICH and the indigenous community Ch'orti' of Morola, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- carry out a fact finding mission on the risks and threats facing the Ch'orti' community of Morola and take all necessary measures to guarantee their security and that of COMUNDICH members;
- guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Guatemala 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


 Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Manuel Espina, Ambassador of Guatemala to the US ~ via website and email
 Luis E. Arreaga, US Ambassador to Guatemala, in care of human rights officer Rain Bian ~ via email
 Stefanie Fabrico, Guatemala Desk, US State Department ~ via email
 Esmeralda Arosemena de Troitiño, Rapporteur for Guatemala, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
 Antonia Urrejola, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Portman
 US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

FrontlineDefenders_4/09/2018_Guatemala

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