

via email: aberger@mingob.gob.gt  
**Sr. Enrique Antonio Degenhart Asturias**  
 Minister of the Interior of Guatemala

via email: TAldana@mp.gob.gt  
**Lic. María Consuelo Porras Argueta**  
 Attorney General of Guatemala

May 23, 2018

Dear Minister of the Interior Degenhart and Attorney General Porras Argueta:

We are deeply distressed at the killing of three human rights defenders within the same week: **Luis Marroquin, 47; José Can Xol, 37; and Mateo Chamám Paau, 31.**

On the morning of May 9, two unknown hooded men in a black Toyota Hilux truck shot Luis Arturo Marroquin in the back several times as he left a local bookshop in San Luis Jilotepéque, Jalapa Department. He had just arrived that morning by bus from Jalapa municipality to attend a municipal assembly. He was a member of the National Directorate of the Committee for Campesino Development (CODECA), which promotes land rights and rural development for indigenous farming families. On May 2 President Jimmy Morales referred to CODECA in a disrespectful way in a public speech and discredited their activities.

On the morning of May 10, José Can Xol was fatally shot while trying to help members of the community of Choctún Basilá, in Cobán, Alta Verapaz Department, who were being attacked by several unidentified armed men. He was a member of the Campesino Committee of the Highlands (CCDA) and was involved in protecting and defending the community in a long-standing land tenure conflict.

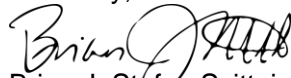
During the night of May 13, CCDA member Mateo Chamám Paau was found dead in the community of San Juan Tres Ríos, also in Cobán. Community members began searching for him after his family noticed he had been missing for hours. An arrest warrant had been issued against him in 2015 in the context of the land tenure conflict between the community and alleged owners of the land. He had reported receiving threats.

Founded in 1982, CCDA promotes access to land and the labor rights of Mayan campesinos. CCDA has suffered numerous threats and attacks, including several attacks against their office and leaders in June 2017. In June 2016, indigenous leader Daniel Choc Pop was killed in San Juan Tres Ríos (cf our letter of June 25 2016).

We strongly condemn the killing of these human rights defenders. We believe other members of CODECA and CCDA remain at risk. Therefore we **strongly urge** that you

- carry out an immediate, thorough, and impartial investigation into the three assassinations described above, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- publicly recognize the important and legitimate work of human rights defenders in Guatemala and refrain from using language that stigmatizes, abuses, disparages or discriminates against them;
- adopt a Public Policy to Protect Defenders in accordance with the minimum criteria set out by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the 2014 case *Human Rights Defender v. Guatemala*.

Sincerely,

  
 Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Co-coordinators

  
 Christine Stonebraker Martínez

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 and US Representatives Beatty, 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:**