

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

via email: fiscalgeneral@pm.lex.gob.gt  
**Lic. María Consuelo Porras Argueta**  
Attorney General of Guatemala

September 24, 2018

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

We are profoundly disturbed by President Morales' announcement on August 31 to not renew the mandate of the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) and the resulting harassment and intimidation of prominent human rights leaders and their organizations.

CICIG was created on December 12, 2006 when the United Nations and Guatemala signed a treaty-level agreement setting it up as an independent body to support the Public Prosecutor's Office, the National Civilian Police, and other state institutions in the investigation of sensitive and difficult cases. Its ultimate goal is to strengthen national judicial institutions, in their continuing efforts to confront illegal groups and organized crime.

On September 3, Iván Velásquez, the CICIG Commissioner, left Guatemala for four days of meetings in Washington and New York. He has been refused re-entry to Guatemala.

In the wake of President Morales' announcement to not renew CICIG's mandate, which expires in September 2019, the Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Guatemala (UNDEFEGUA) released a communique on September 6 detailing the harassment and intimidation of some of the country's most prominent human right activists, including

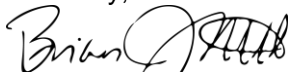
- Nery Rodenas, director of the Archbishop's Human Rights Office of Guatemala;
- Helen Mack, Executive Director of the Myrna Mack Foundation;
- Alfonso Carrillo, a human rights attorney;
- Daniel Pascual, leader of the Campesino Unity Committee;
- Iduvina Hernández, Executive Director of the Association for the Study of Security in Democracy;
- Jorge Alberto Santos, General Coordinator of UDEFEGUA; and
- Claudia Virginia Samayoa, president of the Board of Directors of UDEFEGUA and a member of the Executive Committee of the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT).

Since August 31 several police and military units have been monitoring and surveilling the offices of human rights organizations, including one of the UDEFEGUA buildings, sometimes with armored and armed vehicles.

We therefore **strongly urge** Guatemalan authorities

- reverse the decision to not renew the CICIG's mandate and the decision barring the re-entry of CICIG Commissioner Iván Velásquez into Guatemala
- publicly recognize the important and legitimate work of human rights defenders, allow them to do their work without fear or restraint, and guarantee their safety, in strict accordance with their wishes

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  
Francisco José Eguiguren Praeli, Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, 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:**