

via email: pdh@pdh.org.gt Lic. Augusto Jordán Rodas Andrade Procurador de los Derechos Humanos de Guatemala	via email: fiscalgeneralmp@gmail.com carrecis@mp.gob.gt Lic. María Consuelo Porras Argueta Attorney General of Guatemala
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April 2, 2020

Dear Lic. Rodas y Lic. Porras:

We are extremely disturbed by the assassination of Mayan indigenous leader **Dominga Ramos Saloj**, age 53, at her home in the Las Delicias community in Santo Domingo municipality, Suchitepéquez Department.

At 5:30pm on March 5 an unknown man with tattoos and wearing a white T-shirt and cap knocked on her door. When she answered, he said, "This job is for you," took a weapon from his waist, shot her eight times, and ran away on a motorcycle. Her daughter-in-law and grandchildren witnessed the killing.

Dominga Ramos Saloj was an active member of the Committee for Campesino Development (CODECA), a human rights organization that works with the rural poor on issues such as wage conditions for farmers, land reform, gender equality, indigenous rights, defense of natural resources, and access to affordable electric energy. She was active in the organized resistance against the ENERGUATE company, an electricity distributor owned by Actis Capital, an English private equity firm. ENERGUATE, which operates a monopoly in 80% of Guatemala, is a principal target of CODECA's campaign to promote access to affordable electricity. In response, ENERGUATE has waged a defamation campaign against CODECA leaders over the past several years.

Although the privatization of electricity began in 1996, CODECA's organized resistance to privatization has intensified since governmental decree 145-2013 was issued in 2014, clearing the way for more privatization. This decree contradicts the rights and autonomy of indigenous communities and peoples, who have not given their prior consent to plans for expansion of rural electrification by private companies. Rural dwellers continue to see increasing rates and lower quality service.


Dominga Ramos Saloj and her husband Miguel Ixcal Pérez are well-known leaders in their community. Miguel Ixcal Pérez, who was a candidate for mayor of Santo Domingo in 2019, holds a leadership position in CODECA and is active in the Movement for the Liberation of Peoples (MLP), whose initials are painted on the entrance to their house. He currently serves as a political adviser to Vicenta Jerónimo, the only MLP deputy in the Congress of the Republic.

COCDECA leaders have faced many challenges in recent years, including the assassinations of ten of its leaders in 2019 and seven in 2018 (cf our letters of May 23 and Aug 2, 2018). This gun hit—killing a mother in front of her family members—is especially troubling because it sends a strong warning message not only to CODECA but to all human rights defenders who are active in organized resistance movements.

We urge your government to

- continue a thorough, transparent and impartial investigation into the assassination of Dominga Ramos Saloj, publish the results, and bring those responsible (including the intellectual authors) to justice
- provide protective measures to the family members of Dominga Ramos Saloj and active members of CODECA in Santo Domingo, in strict accordance with their wishes

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-coordinators


 Christine Stonebraker Martinez

copies: Sr. Enrique Antonio Degenhart Asturias, Minister of the Interior of Guatemala ~ via email
 OACNUDH: Oficina del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos en Guatemala ~ via email
 UDEFEGUA: Unidad de Protección a Defensoras y Defensores de Derechos Humanos en Guatemala ~ via email
 Alfonso José Quiñónez Lemus, Ambassador of Guatemala to the US ~ via email, US mail
 Luis E. Arreaga Rodas, US Ambassador to Guatemala, in care of human rights officer Rain Bian ~ via email
 Stefanie Fabrico and Steven Kenoyer, Guatemala Desk, US State Department ~ via email
 Esmeralda Arosemena de Troitiño, Rapporteur for Guatemala, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
 Antonia Urrejola Noguera, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
 NISGUA ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

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