July 6, 2021

Dear Sirs and Madame:

We are saddened and outraged at the assassination of Indigenous Tzeltal human rights defender Simón Pedro Pérez López, age 35, in the Los Bosques de Chiapas region of Chiapas State. At around 10:00am on July 5 he was shopping with his youngest son at the outdoor market in the center of Simojovel municipality when an attacker riding on a motorcycle shot him in the head.

For many years, Simón Pedro Pérez López served his community in the Altos de Chiapas region as a defender of human rights for the Maya Indigenous Tzeltal and Tzotzil peoples who reside there in the highlands. He often accompanied communities to denounce violence. Just nine days before his assassination, he accompanied residents to the Secretaría del Gobierno of Pantelhó municipality, requesting intervention to hold back armed groups who have been coming to the highlands for the past several years. Narco-traffickers have been extorting families and forcing some off their land.

Simón Pérez resided with his wife and four children in a community called Israelita in Simojovel municipality. He was a catechist at Santa Catarina Catholic Church in Pantelhó municipality. He was active with the civil society organization Las Abejas de Acteal. Last year he served as president of the board of directors of Las Abejas (The Bees), a Christian, pacifist, anti-neoliberal grassroots organization. The organization continues to seek justice for the Acteal Massacre of December 22, 1997; on that day, armed members of the paramilitary group Máscara Roja (Red Mask) entered a Catholic prayer meeting and murdered 45 Las Abejas members: 21 Indigenous Tzotzil women, 15 children, and 9 elderly people.

The harassment, disappearance, and killings of environmental and human rights defenders throughout Mexico is quite concerning. According to Red TDT (All Rights for Everyone Network), 45 human rights defenders were killed in the first two years of the current government of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

We strongly urge that you

- immediately, thoroughly and impartially investigate the assassination of Simón Pedro Pérez López, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- adopt measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of the members of Las Abejas de Acteal (including members of the family of Simón Pedro Pérez López), in strict accordance with their wishes
- in consultation with members of Las Abejas de Acteal, take measures to dismantle criminal organizations that are operating in the Los Altos de Chiapas region

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinators

Christine L. Stonebraker-Parvez

copies:
Ismael Brito Mazariegos, Secretary General of the Government in Chiapas ~ via email
Maria del Rosario Piedra Ibarra, President of the National Commission for Human Rights (CNDH) ~ via email
Esteban Mota Baragan, Mexican Ambassador to the US ~ via email
OAS: Inter-American Commission on Human Rights: Esmeralda Arosemena de Trott, Rapporteur for Mexico ~ via email and US mail
OAS: Inter-American Commission on Human Rights: Antonia Urrejola Noguera, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ~ via email and US mail
OAS: Jorge Lomónaco, Permanent Mission of Mexico to the Organization of American States ~ via email
El Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas ~ via email
John S. Creamer, Chargé d'affaires ad interim, US Embassy in Mexico City ~ via email
US State Department, Office of Mexican Affairs ~ via email
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
US Representatives Beatty, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

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