

GUATEMALA –

No more threats against human rights lawyer after RRN letters pressure officials

RRN letter November 11, 2005

UA 274/05

RRN members wrote Guatemalan officials on November 11, 2005 after lawyer and human rights defender Romeo Monterrosa Orellana and his family received a string of death threats and suffered intimidation, believed to be linked to his work defending peasant farmers against powerful landowners. During the first two weeks of October 2005 they received threatening text messages on their mobile phone and were followed by suspicious pick-up trucks. There were also unsuccessful attempts to break into Monterrosa's office.

Romeo Monterrosa is representing campesinos (peasant farmers and farm workers) who claim ownership of Colonia La Catorze farm on the coast in Puerto San José. The farm was sold to a Panamanian company in 1996, despite the Constitutional prohibition on non-Guatemalans owning property within 15km of the country's borders, including its coastline. (The notary public who authorized the deal is now the Solicitor General.) Since then, Monterrosa and his family have been the subject of various threats and intimidations.

GOOD NEWS! October 27, 2006: Monterrosa and his family have not been threatened since letters were sent on his behalf, and their lives have gone back to normal. The authorities did not offer protection to the family, and have not conducted an adequate investigation, but Monterrosa says he is no longer concerned for his or his family's safety, and he is very grateful for all the support and solidarity he has received.