

VIA FACSIMILE: 011 502 2251 2218
Licenciado Juan Luis Florido
Attorney General of Guatemala

VIA FACSIMILE: 011 502 2362 0237
Carlos Roberto Vielman Montes
Minister of the Interior and Justice of Guatemala

October 11, 2006

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned for the safety of **Roly Escobar Ochoa** and his colleagues, **members of the National Coordinating Body of Marginalized Communities and Areas of Guatemala (CONAPAMG)** who work on issues of access to housing, public services and ownership legalization for poor urban and rural communities. During the past two months, they have been subjected to death threats and numerous instances of intimidation to dissuade members of CONAPAMG from demanding justice for the death of CONAPAMG member Carmen Sagastume, who was murdered by unknown assailants on August 18.

On September 9 when Roly Escobar was publicizing the killing of Carmen Sagastume, two unidentified individuals were heard speaking of plans to kill him. Witnesses saw them putting loaded weapons into a car and driving off. CONAPAMG later identified one person as someone considered to be a suspect in Carmen Sagastume's murder. On September 12, the hearse used to transport the body of Carmen Sagastume was parked for several hours close to the headquarters of CONAPAMG. On September 14, from 2am to 6am, a man wearing a black cap and black sweater stood outside the home of Roly Escobar. When neighbors approached him, he covered his face and ran off. On September 20, from 2am to 6am, two men wearing dark clothing stood outside the house of Roly Escobar's former wife and their children. The police did not respond to Roly Escobar's call to investigate.

In light of these facts, we strongly urge you to

- Call for a prompt, impartial and thorough investigation into the death threats received by Roly Escobar and the killing of Carmen Sagastume, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;
- Guarantee the safety of Roly Escobar Ochoa and other members of the CONAPAMG, in accordance with their wishes.

We remind you that human rights defenders have the right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Be assured that we will see to it that our elected officials here in the United States are made aware of human rights violations in Guatemala.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

cc: Ambassador Jose Guillermo Castillo ~ via fax: 202 745 1908
Ambassador James Derham ~ via fax: 011-502-2334-8477
Paolo Carozza, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights~ fax: (202)458-3992
Courtney Turner, Guatemala Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202-647-2597
Lic. Oscar Berger Perdomo, President of Guatemala ~ via fax: 011-502-2239-0090
CONAPAMG ~ via US mail
US Senators DeWine & Voinovich ~ via email
US Reps Brown, Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

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