

Attorney General, Guatemala
Juan Luís Florido
Fax: 011 502 2251 2218

President of Republic Guatemala
Oscar Berger Perdomo
Fax: 011 502 2221 4423

July 24, 2006

Dear Sirs:

We note with dismay and anger that many of those who experienced or witnessed the genocide, terrorism, torture and other crimes committed by the government forces and agents between 1978 and 1986 in Guatemala are now being forced to endure a campaign of lies, threats and acts of violence orchestrated by those who committed the crimes and their supporters.

In the year 2000, due to the culture of impunity in the Guatemala legal system, human rights organizations and individual human rights defenders initiated judicial proceeding in Spain against former Guatemalan army officers. One of the criminal acts being investigated is an assault in 1980 against the Spanish Embassy in which 37 people (who had taken refuge there) were killed by security forces.

On June 24, 2006, Judge Santiago Pedraz arrived in Guatemala from Spain to interview witnesses and defendants. On June 26, 102 Guatemalan human rights organizations issued a press release announcing the visit of the Spanish judge, calling for an end to impunity and supporting the proceedings being processed in Spain.

In response, the association of Military Veterans of Guatemala (AVEMILGUA) stated that the proceedings were "nothing more than political and legal persecution by those groups, who want to continue the war" and that "the case could bring tragic actions." There have been similar declarations made on public radio, which also singled out individual witnesses due to be interviewed by the Spanish judge and prosecutor.

We are seriously concerned for the safety of **Miguel Albizurez** and other witnesses; **Silvia Solarzano**, **Rosario Pu** and other plaintiffs; members of Truth, Memory and Justice Foundation, Rigoberta Menchu Foundation, Center for Legal Action on Human Rights and other human rights organizations.

We urgently request that:

- your authorities order full and impartial investigations into the threats against members of human rights organizations, plaintiffs and witnesses to be interviewed by judge Santiago Pedraz;
- guarantee the safety of all members of organizations who support the proceedings
- guarantee that Judge Santiago Pedraz will be able to carry out his work investigating genocide and other violations committed during the internal armed conflict.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

cc: Human Rights Organization: Unidad de Protección de Defensoras y Defensores de Derechos Humanos ~ via fax
Ambassador José Guillermo Castillo ~ via fax
Minister of the Interior Carlos Vielma ~ via fax
Ambassador James Derham ~ via fax
Courtney Turner, Guatemala Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax
US Senators DeWine & Voinovich ~ via email
US Reps Brown, Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

UA 182/06 GUATEMALA

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