

August 29, 2005

Governor Bill Richardson  
490 Old Santa Fe Trail, Ste. 400  
Santa Fe, NM 87501  
Phone: (505) 476-2200 / Fax: (505) 476-2226

Dear Governor Richardson,

In the past few days you have come out strongly with a "State of Emergency" regarding the escalating violence at the US/Mexico border. We urge you to help end that violence in a specific situation existing less than a mile from the fence in Sunland Park/Anapra.

**Luis Alberto Guerrero Rodriguez**, age 49, died on August 19 due to blows that caused internal bleeding and brain damage. He was brutally beaten by paid guards of the wealthy Zaragoza family and their leader, Manuel Balderas, a lawyer who has been in charge of aggressively displacing families from Colonia Lomas de Poleo. Luis Alberto leaves behind his wife, Lucia, and their three children, the youngest of whom is six.

Luis's death resulted from over two years of violence waged by the Zaragoza family to get control of this remote, poor community, which is now coveted by the wealthy elites of Juarez because of a proposed international bridge. After years of possession, the residents have legal rights to the land, based in the Mexican constitution and the state laws of Chihuahua.

Since 1992 the wealthy and powerful Zaragoza family has been trying to gain possession of the land in the courts. Having failed every legal attempt, they resorted to violence in May 2003. First the Zaragozas influenced authorities to take out all the electric infrastructure paid for by the residents. Then they created a vigilante group, paying \$300 pesos a day to Grupo Zaragoza. Grupo Zaragoza built a barbed wire fence, watch towers, and closed gates with armed guards who can prevent residents' entry into their colonia. The colonia has been reduced from 350 to 120 families.

The residents are now protesting outside the state government offices in Ciudad Juarez. Federal, state and city refuse to curtail the activities of Grupo Zaragoz, despite judges' warning that all parties must await their decision in court.

On behalf of the victimized families of Lomas del Poleo, we urge you to

- urge Governor Reyes Baeza of Chihuahua and city and state authorities to peacefully remove the Grupo Zaragoza guards and the gates
- urge all parties to await a decision by Mexican judges.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

copies: Ambassador Carlos Alberto De Icaza Gonzalez ~ via fax: 202 728 1698  
Ambassador Antonio O. Garza, Jr ~ via fax: 011-52-55-5207-0091  
William Duncan, Mexico Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202.647.5752  
Lic. José Reyes Baeza Terraza, Gobernador de Chihuahua ~ via fax: 011-52-614 429 3461  
US Senators DeWine & Voinovich ~ via email  
US Reps Brown, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, 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.**