

IRTF

InterReligious Task Force on Central America

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via fax 011 502 2251 2218 Licenciado Oscar Berger Perdomo Presidente de la República de Guatemala	via fax: 011 502 251 2218 Juan Luis Florido Attorney General/Fiscal General, Guatemala
via fax 011 502 2362 0237 Carlos Vielman Minister of the Interior, Guatemala	

October 15, 2005

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned for the safety of a number of human rights workers who recently have been personally attacked and their offices robbed. On September 13 four armed men broke into the office of the Group for Service, Peace and Justice in Guatemala (SERPAJ-G) and held five human rights activists hostage for an hour. **FACTOR MÉNDEZ and ESTER CABALLERO of SERPAJ-G, and MANOLO DUARTE, JUSTO SOTO, and JOSÉ VICENTE of the Strategic Alliance for Human Rights**, were gagged and their hands and feet were bound. The attackers threatened and insulted all of them; they threatened SERPAJ-G Coordinator Factor Méndez with death. When they left the office, the men stole a computer and discs with information on the human rights situation in Guatemala and the activists' work plans. This is another act of intimidation and harassment directed at human rights defenders, specifically at an organization recently created to work for peace and justice in the country.

We remind you that under the Peace Accords you, the government, agreed to "take special measures to protect those persons or entities working in the field of human rights" and to "investigate, in a timely and exhaustive manner, any complaint it may receive relating to acts or threats that may be directed at them."

Therefore, we **strongly urge** you to

- Ensure the safety of Factor Méndez, Ester Caballero, Manolo Duarte, Justo Soto, and José Vicente
- carry out a thorough and impartial investigation of the break-in and aggression described above, publicize the results and prosecute those responsible.

Thank you for your prompt attention.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

cc: Ambassador José Guillermo Castillo ~ fax: 1 202 745 1908
Ambassador James Derham ~ fax: 011 502 334 8477
Courtney Turner, Guatemala Desk ~ via fax: 1 202 647 2597
Guatemala Human Rights Commission USA ~ via fax: 1 202 526 4611
U.S. Senators DeWine and Voinovich ~ via email
U.S. Representatives Brown, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

GHRC_SERPAJ Guatemala

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