

via fax: 011 502 2413 8658 Sr. Carlos Vinicio Gomez Ruiz Minister of the Interior, Guatemala	via fax: 011 502 2411 9124/9326 Lic. Juan Luis Florido Attorney General and Head of the Public Prosecutor's Office, Guatemala
via fax: 011 502 2248 3020/3021 Sr. Orlando Blanco Presidential Secretary for Human Rights and Peace, Guatemala	

March 21, 2008

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned for the safety of **Guillermo Chen** and **his wife** and **two children**. We believe their lives are at risk as a consequence of the fact that Sr. Chen's house in the city of Rabinal, Baja Verapaz Department, was shot at six times by two cyclists on the evening of March 5. This attack is probably related to his work as Director of Fundación Nueva Esperanza, Rio Negro, which campaigns for justice for crimes committed during Guatemala's internal armed conflict between 1960 and 1996. They have campaigned for an end to discrimination against indigenous people. Last month, Guillermo Chen appeared at least 15 times at a local radio station calling for indigenous people to attend public legal hearings about one of the massacres at Rio Negro during the World Bank funded construction of the Chixoy Dam. On March 13, 1982, armed civilians killed 177 indigenous women and girls.

Also in February, New Hope Foundation organized a delegation of survivors and witnesses of the Rio Negro massacre to travel to Spain to give testimony in the case against Guatemala's former president, José Efraín Ríos Montt, and other former high-ranking officials on charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Based on the facts presented above, we strongly urge that you

- take immediate measures to guarantee the safety of Guillermo Chen, his wife and two children
- conduct an immediate, thorough and swift investigation into the incident detailed above, make the results and bring those responsible to justice.

We remind you that human rights defenders must be free 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.

We will be monitoring the news and following updates from human rights organizations to ensure that this case is taken seriously and that those working for the rights of indigenous people are protected throughout Guatemala. In addition, we will make a point to keep our legislators in the U.S. Congress aware of the situation.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai,
Coordinator

Copies: Fundación Nueva Esperanza, Rio Negro ~ via fax: 011 502 2221 3999
Ambassador Jose Guillermo Castillo, Guatemalan Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202 745 1908
Ambassador James Dirham, US Ambassador to Guatemala ~ via fax: 011-502-2334-8477
Paolo Carozza, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: (202)458-3992
Guatemala Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202-647-2597
US Senators Brown & Voinovich and US Representatives Latta, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email
UA64/08 GUATEMALA

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