

via fax: 011 502 2413 8658  
**Sr. Carlos Vinicio Gomez Ruiz**  
 Minister of the Interior of Guatemala

via fax: : 011 502 2411 9124/9326  
**Lic. Juan Luis Florido**  
 Attorney General and Head of Public Prosecutor's Office of Guatemala

March 25, 2008

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely saddened at the killing of one of the founders of SITRABANSUR (Union of Banana Workers of the South), **Miguel Angel Ramirez Enríquez** in the village of El Semillero, Escuintla Department. On March 2 two armed men, their faces covered, waited near his home and shot him as he was returning. He ran into his house and tried to escape out the back door, but the men caught him outside, forced him to the ground, and shot him several more times. He died two hours later in the hospital. Reports indicate that he had four bullet wounds and at least one knife wound.

His relatives state that 15 days before his killing he had said that he had been offered money from the farm's managers to resign from SITRABANSUR. He also said that he had received death threats via telephone.

Other members of SITRABANSUR's Executive Committee have been intimidated. On February 29, Victor Manuel Gómez Mendoza reported that unidentified men had asked his neighbor about his whereabouts. On March 3, Alberto López Pérez said unidentified men had been watching his home. During the night of March 8, intruders entered his home, but he and his family were able to escape.

The SITRABANSUR trade union was formed by banana workers in July 2007 to negotiate collective terms and working conditions. They claim that the owners of the farm on which they work do not pay the minimum wage and do not pay social security and other contributions. On November 20, 2007, all of the founding members of the union, including its leaders and their families, were dismissed from their jobs and evicted from their homes. The previous day, **German Aguilar Brego, Alberto López Pérez** and **Victor Manuel Gómez** received a death threat from a member of management of the banana farm: "If you don't stop the conflict you could turn up floating in the river. Let's hope I don't find you on your own on the street, because if I do, who knows what might happen to you."

We **urge you** to take immediate action to

- guarantee the safety of all SITRABANSUR leaders, in accordance with their own wishes;
- order a full investigation into the death of Miguel Angel Ramirez Enriquez, and bring those responsible to justice;
- initiate a swift and impartial investigation into reports of a break-in at the home of Alberto López Pérez and the intimidation of other union members and bring those responsible to justice;
- allow human rights workers, including trade union leaders, to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Last October we wrote you about the Sep 23 2007 murder of another banana union leader, Marco Tulio Portela Ramírez, of the SITRABI union in Izabal Department. We are still awaiting results in the investigation of his murder.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

cc: SITRABANSUR ~ via fax: 011 502 2238 2272  
 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  
 Courtney Turner, Guatemala Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202-647-2597  
 US Senators Brown & Voinovich and US Representatives Kaptur, Kucinich, Latta, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Sutton, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

UA72/08Guatemala

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