

# IRTF

## InterReligious Task Force on Central America

3606 Bridge Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44113

tel: 216.961.0003 fax: 216.961.0002 e-mail: [irtf@irtfcleveland.org](mailto:irtf@irtfcleveland.org)

via fax: 001 502 2413 8658 <b>Sr. Héctor Mauricio López Bonilla</b> Minister of Government of Guatemala	via fax: 011 502 2411 9124 <b>Lic. Claudia Paz y Paz Bailey</b> Attorney General of Guatemala
via fax: 011 502 2422 2519 <b>Sr. Carlos Contreras</b> Minister of Labor of Guatemala	via fax: 011 502 2412 0423 <b>Sr. Sergio de la Torre</b> Minister of Economy of Guatemala

March 2, 2012

Dear Sir and Madam:

We are outraged at the killing of **Miguel Angel González Ramírez**, a member of the Banana Workers Union of Izabal Department (SITRABI). On February 5 he was shot dead while holding his infant son after he returned home from a football game. On the same day the government inexplicably ended its security protection for SITRABI General Secretary Noe Ramírez whose brother, Marco Tullio Ramírez Portela, another union official, was murdered in 2007 (cf our letter to Guatemalan officials October 23, 2007). His case is included in the pending Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) labor complaint filed with the U.S. government by SITRABI and other Guatemalan trade unions.

Miguel Angel González Ramírez is the seventh SITRABI banana union member murdered in less than a year. No one has been arrested of any of these murders, which underscores the climate of impunity that exists for union workers.

We are extremely concerned for the safety of other SITRABI members. We **strongly urge** that you

- launch a full and impartial investigation into the murder of Miguel González and all other SITRABI banana union members murdered since 2007, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice;
- restore security protection measures to guarantee the safety of Noe Ramírez and other SITRABI union officials, in line with their wishes;
- act quickly to satisfactorily address all worker rights issues raised in the CAFTA labor complaint.

The previous administration of President Alvaro Colom made a commitment (at the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) conference in January 2008) to do everything in his power to eradicate the violence against union activists and put an end to the impunity endemic in Guatemala. We hope that the current administration will make such a commitment.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Coordinator

cc: Francisco Villagran de Leon, Guatemalan Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202 745 1908  
Stephen McFarland, US Ambassador to Guatemala ~ via fax: 011-502-2331-2348  
Dinah Shelton, Chair, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights~ via fax: (202)458-3992  
Siobhan Sheils, Guatemala Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202-647-2597  
Christopher Johnson, Diplomacy Officer for Central America, US State Dept. ~ via email  
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email  
US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Renacci, Ryan, Sutton ~ via email

LEAP 2/17/12\_Guatemala

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