

via Fax: 011 502 2239 0090
Sr. Otto Pérez Molina
President of Guatemala

via fax: 011 502 2411 9210
Sra. Claudia Paz y Paz Bailey
Attorney General of Guatemala

October 25, 2012

Dear Sir and Madam:

We were saddened and outraged at the fatal shooting by the army, on October 4, of **eight K'iche' citizens of Totonicapán and the wounding of forty others** as they peacefully marched on the Pan-American Highway to protest electricity rate hikes, a series of constitutional reforms about which indigenous peoples were not consulted, and a proposed change to the teaching curriculum which threatens to restrict access to education in rural areas.

We commend the government's prompt response to widespread condemnation and demands for justice for this tragedy from human rights organizations, church officials, international agencies, and indigenous communities that resulted in the arrest, on October 11, of Col. Juan Chiro Sal and eight soldiers who will be tried on charges of "extrajudicial execution."

We remind you that this violence highlights systemic problems such as the lack of political access and historic exclusion of the great majority of poor, agricultural and indigenous communities. Furthermore, since the National Civilian Police (PCN) is the only institution trained to provide citizen security, the continued use of the military in these operations creates conditions for the repetition of similar violence. Therefore, in addition to following through with prosecution of those responsible for the massacre, we **strongly urge** that you

- provide just reparations to the victims, and move forward with any agreements concerning electricity rates that came out of dialogue with community leaders;
- immediately institutionalize the removal of the armed forces from involvement in responses to civil conflicts and provide a clear timeline for the prompt removal of the armed forces from all aspects of citizen security;
- revoke Congressional Decree 40-2000, which legalizes the use of the military to support police in combating organized and common crime;
- move forward promptly with the necessary reforms to the National Civilian Police, providing sufficient budget and institutional support for the reforms to be successful;
- fully respect indigenous rights and implement a comprehensive, participatory, and effective dialogue process to end the exclusion of indigenous communities and ensure the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

Copies: 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, Rapporteur for Guatemala, 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

GHRC_Guatemala

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