

URGENT ACTION

July 12, 2005

HUMAN RIGHTS LEADER ASSASSINATED

Alvaro Juárez, 64 years old, was assassinated on the night of July 8.

According to the Unity of Protection for Human Rights Defenders, he was eating dinner with his wife at his house in San Benito Petén when heavily armed men arrived at the door. His wife went back into the kitchen. Then she heard shots. When she returned to the room where her husband had been, she found him dead.

Mr. Juárez played a leadership role in the Alliance for Life and Peace and was also a member of the Association of the Displaced of the Petén. He was working on issues of development related to health, education, land, housing, and humanitarian assistance. He was also working against impunity in the Petén and often denounced injustice, corruption, and abuses of authority committed by the National Civil Police.

The Association of Displaced of the Petén is a member of the Alliance for Life and Peace, a network of organizations that has been carrying out campaigns against the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) and against the construction of hydroelectric dams in the Petén.

The motive for the killing is unknown, but Guatemalan human rights analysts note with concern that his murder coincides with the intimidation of two other human rights defenders who have been active in the struggle against CAFTA. Those two human rights defenders have received written death threats. The characteristic that unites these three cases is that the attacks are being directed against leaders who have been important in the movement but have not been public.

An attempt had previously been made on Mr. Juarez' life, also while he was in his home. He had reported the attempt to the authorities, but it was never investigated, and it was not reported to other organizations within civil society. Several days before his murder, according to reports, he had received threats and had reported them to the Public Prosecutor's Office and to the Human Rights Procurator's Office in Guatemala City.

The Association of the Displaced of the Petén has purposely not done any media work related to the murder, in order to avoid pressure on the survivors. Please respond to the action below, while respecting their wishes not to publicize the case with the media.

REQUESTED ACTION

- 1) Express serious concern about the murder of Alvaro Juárez.
- 2) Urge the authorities to investigate the murder thoroughly and prosecute those responsible.
- 3) Express serious concern for the safety of Alvaro Juárez' family members and all members of the Association of the Displaced of the Petén and the Alliance for Life and Peace. Demand that the Guatemalan government take whatever protective measures they request.
- 4) Remind the Guatemalan government that under the Peace Accords, it has the specific responsibility to protect human rights workers. In signing the Peace Accords the government agreed to the following: "The Government of the Republic of Guatemala shall take special

measures to protect those persons or entities working in the field of human rights. Furthermore it shall investigate, in a timely and exhaustive manner, any complaint it may receive relating to acts or threats that may be directed at them. The Government of the Republic of Guatemala reiterates the commitment to safeguard and protect effectively the work of individuals and entities engaged in upholding human rights.”

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY TO:

Presidente de la República de Guatemala
Licenciado Óscar Berger Perdomo
Casa Presidencial, 6 a. Avenida, 4-18 zona 1 Ciudad de Guatemala GUATEMALA
Email: presidente@scspr.gob.gt
Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President
Fax: 502 2251 2218
Salutation: Estimado Fiscal General/Dear Sir

Attorney General
Juan Luis Florido
Fiscal General Fiscalia General del Ministerio Publico 8a. Avenida 10-67, Zona 1 Ciudad
Guatemala GUATEMALA
Fax: 011 502 251 2218
Salutation: Estimado Fiscal General/Dear Sir

Minister of the Interior
Ministro de Gobernacion
Carlos Vielman
6a.Avenida 4-64, zona 4, nivel 3
Ciudad de Guatemala
Guatemala
Fax: 011 502 2362 0237
Email: ministro@mingob.gob.gt
Salutation: Senor Ministro/ Dear Minister

Copy to: Ambassador Jose Guillermo Castillo Embassy of Guatemala 2220 R St. NW
Washington DC 20008 Fax: 1 202 745 1908
email: ambassador@guatemala-embassy.org

Guatemala Human Rights Commission- USA

GHRC-USA
3321 12th St, NE
Washington, DC 20017
202-529-6599
202-526-4611 fax
ghrc-usa@ghrc-usa.org
www.ghrc-usa.org