



human rights *first*

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April 10, 2009

Dr. José Amílcar Velásquez Zarate
Fiscal General de la República y Jefe del Ministerio Público
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Dear Mr. Velásquez:

Kidnapping and Abuse of Gladys Monterroso Velásquez

We, the below-signed 1,492 individuals, join Human Rights first in writing to express our grave concern over the recent kidnapping and abuse of Gladys Monterroso Velasquez, wife of the Guatemalan Human Rights Ombudsman Sergio Morales Alvarado. We welcome the investigation into the kidnapping and urge you to ensure that it leads to the identification and prosecution of all those responsible for this crime.

Gladys Monterroso is the Secretary General of the Encuentro por Guatemala political party as well as a renowned lawyer, notary, and university professor. She is recognized for her dedication to the advancement of human rights, truth and justice in Guatemala.

On March 25, 2009, Monterroso was eating breakfast in a restaurant located in the Zona 9 neighborhood of Guatemala City when she reportedly received a phone call. When she stepped outside the restaurant to answer the call, three hooded men forced her into a vehicle. After 13 hours her kidnappers informed her husband that she had been left in the Atlantida neighborhood of Zona 18 in Guatemala City. No ransom was demanded.

According to Monterroso, while detained for thirteen hours, she was burned with cigarettes, beaten, and subject to both sexual and psychological abuse by her kidnappers.

This violent attack occurred just one day after the Ombudsman released the first report documenting the contents of the national police archives, which contain over 80 million documents relating to Guatemala's 36-year armed conflict.

Morales' report, *The Right to Know*, contains information connecting the Guatemalan National Police to atrocities committed during the war. Information from the police archives has already led to the apprehension of two former police officials for alleged links to death squads.

We are concerned that this recent aggression against Gladys Monterroso may be linked to the release of the report by her husband. We are also concerned that it represents a threat to all those human rights defenders who are seeking justice for past mass atrocities in Guatemala.

We urge you to ensure that the investigation into the kidnapping is impartial and comprehensive and leads to the identification and prosecution of those responsible. A successful prosecution in this emblematic case would assist in breaking the culture of impunity associated with violent crimes against human rights defenders.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We will continue to closely monitor this situation.

The 1,492 names have been hidden for privacy reasons.