



April 28, 2009

Sr. Salvador Gándara
Interior Minister
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Guatemala City,
GUATEMALA

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Dear Mr. Gándara,

Support Institute of Analysis of Attacks against Human Rights Defenders

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our concern over your decision on March 31 2009 to dismiss important advisors in the Femicide and Human Rights Unit of the Interior Ministry. These advisors directed the Institute of Analysis of Attacks against Human Rights Defenders and the Human Rights Unit of the police investigation division (DINC). We urge you to reinstate the advisers and to fully support these two essential institutions.

The situation of human rights defenders in Guatemala is extremely grave. The UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders declared in her 2009 Guatemala mission report, “In Guatemala there is almost total de facto impunity for violations of human rights, including those committed against human rights defenders The reported figure of 98 per cent of impunity for attacks against human rights defenders makes justice an empty word in Guatemala.” (para 75).

The Institute of Analysis of Attacks against Human Rights Defenders and the Human Rights Unit of the DINC have worked to create effective lines of coordination between the Interior Ministry, the police, the General Direction for Civil Intelligence, civil society, the Prosecutor General’s office and the international community. They have engaged in serious and prompt investigations of acts of violence and threats against human rights defenders. As cited in the 2009 Guatemala mission report by the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders, the work of the two institutions has been vital “to

increase police performance and [obtain] better protection” for human rights defenders. (para 70)

We commend the government for establishing the two units, but are concerned that the dismissal of the advisors undermines the institutions’ ability to effectively evaluate and combat attacks against human rights defenders. We urge your office to reinstate the advisors and to fully support their efforts to uphold respect for human rights and the rule of law.

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

Sincerely,

Andrew Hudson
Senior Associate
Human Rights Defenders Program
Human Rights First

Amanda Martin
Director
Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA

Maureen Meyer
Associate for Mexico and Central America
Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)

Sylvia Romo
Interim Executive Director
The Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA)