



March 14, 2008

Sr. Carlos Vinicio Gómez Ruiz
Ministro de Gobernación
6ª Avenida 4-64, nivel 2, Zona 4
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

CC.

Lic. Juan Luis Florido
Fiscal General de la República y Jefe del Ministerio Público
8ª Avenida 10-67, Antiguo Edificio del Banco de los Trabajadores, Zona 1
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Sergio Morales
Procurador de Derechos Humanos

Dear Mr. Gomez:

We, the below-signed 1,384 individuals, join Human Rights First in expressing our grave concern about recent attacks against Guillermo Chen, the director of the New Hope Foundation Rio Negro, located in the city of Rabinal. On the evening of March 5, unknown attackers fired six shots into his home while he and his family were inside. We fear that this attack was an attempt to intimidate Chen and to prevent him and his foundation from doing their important work to enable the prosecution of perpetrators of mass atrocities committed during Guatemala's civil war. We fear that the attack on Chen's home is also a means of intimidating the witnesses and victims he works with in Rabinal to stop them from providing evidence about the atrocities they experienced.

Rabinal was one of the areas worst affected by the internal armed conflict in Guatemala. On March 13, 1982, a Civil Patrol group (PAC) killed 177 civilians, mainly indigenous women and girls, in the area of Rio Negro, one of the worst massacres in the conflict. The New Hope Foundation Rio Negro provides education and other services to victims and survivors of the mass atrocities.

Guillermo Chen has been very active in encouraging victims of the massacre and community members to provide evidence to the court charged with investigating the mass atrocities committed in Rio Negro (*el Tribunal de Sentencia de Primera Instancia Penal, Narcoactividad y Delitos contra el Ambiente de Baja Verapaz*). In February alone, he recorded fifteen radio appearances appealing for victims of the mass atrocities in Rio Negro to attend

Headquarters
333 Seventh Avenue
13th Floor
New York, NY 10001
Tel: 212.845.5200
Fax: 212.845.5299

Washington D.C. Office
100 Maryland Avenue, N.E.
Suite 500
Washington, DC 20002
Tel: 202.547.5692
Fax: 202.543.5999

www.humanrightsfirst.org

and testify at the court hearings. On March 5, 2008, victims that Chen's organization works with provided evidence at those court hearings about the hundreds of people killed in the massacres in Rio Negro. Other victims that the organization works with recently went to Spain to give evidence of the massacres in Rio Negro before the Spanish High Court.

We therefore urge you to provide protective measures to Guillermo Chen and others at the New Hope Foundation Rio Negro and the witnesses providing evidence to both the Court of First Instance in Baja Verapaz department and to the High Court in Spain. Furthermore, we call on the Attorney General to investigate the attack against Guillermo Chen and prosecute those responsible and also to investigate and prosecute those most responsible for the mass atrocities committed during the civil war in Rio Negro and elsewhere. Bringing the perpetrators to justice and breaking the cycle of impunity in Guatemala is the best way to protect human rights defenders.

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

Sincerely,

The 1,384 signatures have been hidden for privacy reasons.