

via fax: 011 502 2411 8168 or 2411 9210 <b>Lic. Thelma Esperanza Aldana Hernández</b> Attorney General of Guatemala	via email: <a href="mailto:frivas@mingob.gob.gt">frivas@mingob.gob.gt</a> <b>Sr. Francisco Rivas Lara</b> Minister of the Interior of Guatemala
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June 23, 2017

Dear Attorney General Aldana and Minister of Interior Rivas:

We are writing to express our deep concern for the safety of **Aura Lolita Chávez**, leader of the indigenous K'iche Peoples Council (CPK) and other CPK members.

On June 7, Aura Lolita Chávez and several members of CPK stopped a truck transporting wood between Chichicastenango and Los Encantos in El Quiché Department in order to verify the origin and legality of the wood. CPK may carry out these verifications as part of their right to ownership and control of natural resources on their ancestral lands. Because the truck had no logging permits, the CPK escorted it to Santa Cruz del Quiché, the department capital, to hand it over to the government authorities. The Ombudsperson's office attended to the truck with some officials of the National Police, but then left. At least 10 unidentified armed men arrived in a pick-up truck with long guns and threatened Aura Lolita Chávez and the CPK women with sexual assault. The women ran away, but the armed men chased them while firing gunshots into the air. The women eventually escaped.

Since the incident, rumors have circulated in Santa Cruz that the group of armed men are looking for Aura Lolita Chávez. She is currently in hiding because she fears for her safety. She was granted precautionary measures by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in 2005, and is permanently accompanied by one police officer. On the night of June 7 the Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Guatemala (UDEFEQUA, a non-governmental organization) alerted the authorities of the attacks, but, as of two weeks ago, the authorities still had not implemented any further protection measures to guarantee the safety of Aura Lolita Chávez and the other members of the CPK.

CPK was founded in 2008 to defend the land, territory and common goods of over 87 communities of the K'iche Indigenous peoples in northern Guatemala. They have conducted popular and good faith consultation processes in the region, which enable the communities to express their views about the implementation of economic projects such as hydroelectric, mining, logging and agribusiness projects. CPK members, and especially Aura Lolita Chávez, have faced several death threats and security incidents.

Because we believe the lives of Aura Lolita Chávez and other CPK members are in danger, we **strongly urge** that you:

- promptly investigate the June 7 incidents described above;
- promptly implement protection measures to guarantee the safety of Aura Lolita Chávez and other CPK members in consultation and agreement with them.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Co-Coordinator

copies: Gladys Maritza Ruiz de Veilman, Ambassador of Guatemala to the US ~ via fax 202 745 1908  
Todd D. Robinson, US Ambassador to Guatemala ~ via human rights officer Rain Bian  
Guatemala Desk, US State Dept: Thomas Lee ~ via email  
James Cavallaro, Rapporteur for Guatemala, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email  
Francisco José Erguiguren Praeli, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous People, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email  
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

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