

URGENT ACTION

GUATEMALAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AT RISK

Human rights defender and trade unionist Carlos Hernández was shot dead on 8 March in Chiquimula department, eastern Guatemala. He may have been targeted for his activism. Two other human rights defenders working in the area are at particular risk.

At 8.30am on 8 March, **Carlos Hernández** was driving his pick-up truck in the municipality of Camotán, Chiquimula department. Two men on a motorcycle cut his vehicle off ; one man took out a 9mm handgun and fired eight shots at Carlos Hernández, which killed him. On 21 February, Carlos Hernández had received a death threat by phone, following a meeting where he had spoken out against deforestation in the area. Two members of the New Day Peasant Farmer Coordination (Coordinación Campesina Nuevo Día) – **Omar Jerónimo** and **Damaso Aldana** – received information that threats were made against them at a meeting. They fear for their safety following the killing of Carlos Hernández.

Carlos Hernández was a leading member of several civil society organizations, including Camotán Peasant Farmers Association (Asociación Campesina Camoteca); Coordinación Campesina Nuevo Día; and Coordination of Popular, Indigenous, Church, Trade Union and Peasant Organizations of the East (*Coordinadora de Organizaciones Populares, Indígenas, Iglesias, Sindicales y Campesinas de Oriente*, COPISCO). He was also on the executive committee of the National Trade Union of Health Workers (*Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Salud de Guatemala* – SNTSG), and the National Front for the Struggle (*Frente Nacional de Lucha* – FNL).

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling for an independent, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of Carlos Hernández, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- Urging the authorities to take immediate steps to provide all necessary protection to the members of Coordinación Campesina Nuevo Día in accordance with their wishes;
- Reminding them that human rights defenders, including trade union leaders, have the right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 23 APRIL 2013 TO:

Fiscalía General

Claudia Paz y Paz Bailey

Fiscal General de la República

Ministerio Público

15ª Avenida 15-16, Zona 1, Barrio

Gerona

01001 Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Fax: +502 2411 9124

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Sra.

Fiscal General

Minister of the Interior

Mauricio López Bonilla

Ministro de Gobernación

6ª Avenida 13-71, Zona 1,

Ciudad de Guatemala

Guatemala

Fax: +502 2413 8658

Twitter: @mlopezbonilla

Salutation: Dear Minister/Estimado

Sr.Ministro

And copies to:

UDEFEGUA (NGO)

Unidad de protección a defensores y defensoras de derechos humanos

1 Calle 7-45 zona 1, Oficina 2-b,

Ciudad de Guatemala

GUATEMALA

E-mail: udefegua@yahoo.com

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Amnesty International wrote to the Guatemalan Attorney General's Office in 2010 highlighting the cases of disproportionate charges being filed against Carlos Hernández and a colleague. Carlos Hernández had been charged with activities against the security of the nation and illegal meetings and demonstration, relating to a demonstration in Camotán on 30 March. Amnesty International expressed its concern that criminal charges may have been used to undermine the work of a legitimate community leader and human rights defender. Carlos Hernández was subsequently convicted and ordered to refrain from participating in public and political gatherings for a year.

In Guatemala human rights defenders, including journalists and trade unionists, continue to be threatened, harassed and attacked, by those seeking to dissuade them from their work. In 2011 local organizations documented 402 cases of attacks and intimidation against local human rights defenders, whose work ranges from the protection of human rights of forcibly evicted indigenous communities to the investigation of human rights violation committed during the internal armed conflict. For more information, please see "Guatemala – Submission to the UN Human Rights Committee for the 104th session of the Human Rights Committee (12–30 March 2012)" (AMR 34/001/2012), available at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR34/001/2012/en>

Coordinación Campesina Nuevo Día has been campaigning for the last three years on the issue of land rights for peasant farmers in the Chiquimula department, where large infrastructure projects are being planned. Both SNTSG and FNL have campaigned against corruption in local hospitals.

Name: Carlos Hernández, Omar Jerónimo, Damaso Aldana

Gender m/f: m

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