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GUATEMALA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER KILLED

Human rights defender Juana Raymundo went missing on the night of 27 July in the Quiché department in northwest Guatemala. Her body was discovered the next day. She was 25 years old, and a member of the Campesino Development Committee (Comité de Desarrollo Campesino, CODECA). She is the 8th human rights defender killed in Guatemala in less than three months.

Human rights defender Juana Raymundo was a nurse and a leader in Nebaj, in the Quiché department in northwest Guatemala. She joined CODECA's Youth group (Juventud de CODECA) five years ago, and was recently elected to be part of the Executive Committee of the Movement for the Liberation of Peoples (Movimiento para la Liberación de los Pueblos, MLP). She was involved in engaging and training other women to join the movement. She disappeared on the evening of 27 July. Neighbours alerted the police after finding her body on 28 July by a small river between the Nebaj and Acambalam communities.

CODECA has called on the government to investigate the killings of human rights defenders belonging to the organisation and the Campesino Committee of the Highlands (Comité Campesino del Altiplano, CCDA). CODECA is a human rights organisation based in the Suchitepéquez department. They have worked on improving wage conditions for farmers, land reform, and nationalisation of electric energy. Members of CODECA are continuously being targeted because of their work. Juana is the eighth human rights defender to be killed in less than 3 months.



Photo credit:
Breaking the Silence

Please send an email or tweet without delay. (Postal service is uncertain.)

- * Call on the authorities to initiate a prompt, impartial and thorough investigation on the killing of Juana Raymundo, and other human rights defenders from CODECA and CCDA. The investigation should include the theory of the attack being a possible retaliation for their activities as human rights defenders, as mentioned in the recently adopted General Instruction from the Attorney General.
- * Insist that they take all possible measures to guarantee the safety of all CCDA and CODECA members at risk in accordance with their wishes.
- * Ask them to condemn this wave of killings, to publicly recognize the important and legitimate work of all human rights defenders and refrain from using language that discredits, stigmatizes, abuses, disparages or discriminates against them.

Send your appeals by email or Twitter, if possible.

Attorney General

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Email: mariadelcarmengarciaescobar@gmail.com

Twitter: @MPGuatemala with the hashtag #JusticiaParaCODECA (Justice for CODECA)

Salutation: Dear Attorney General / Estimada Señora Fiscal

Minister of Interior

Enrique Antonio Degenhart Asturias

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Email: smvasquez@mingob.gob.gt

Twitter: @MinGobGuate with the hashtag #JusticiaParaCODECA (Justice for CODECA)

Salutation: Dear Mister Minister / Estimado Señor Ministro

Please send a copy to

His Excellency Carlos Humberto Jiménez Licona

Ambassador for the Republic of Guatemala

130 Albert Street, Suite 1010

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Jorge Luis Borrayo, Presidente

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Additional information

Human rights defenders in Guatemala carry out their activities in an extremely hostile environment, particularly those working on rights related to land, territory and the environment. They face continuous threats, intimidation, attacks, smear campaigns and stigmatization.

In 2017, the Guatemalan NGO Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Guatemala (UDEFEGUA) registered 496 attacks against human rights defenders. In May 2018, the Attorney General issued an internal General Instruction containing guidelines to

effectively investigate attacks against human rights defenders. In a recent mission to Guatemala, Amnesty International met with members of CODECA who shared their concerns on the number of territory, land and environmental rights defenders that have been targeted (harassed or killed) in the past three months with little progress on investigations into the attacks.

CCDA is a campesino (peasant farmer) organization founded in 1982 that works to promote access to land as well as the labour rights of Mayan campesinos. CCDA has reported already being targeted with attacks and intimidation. In June 2016, Indigenous leader Daniel Choc Pop was killed in San Juan Tres Ríos. Several attacks against the CCDA office and its leaders were registered in June 2017. In May 2018, José Can Xol and Mateo Chamám Paau, two CCDA local leaders, were murdered in the communities of Choctún Basilá and San Juan Tres Ríos. Both were involved in protecting and defending their communities in a long-standing land tenure conflict. They had participated in the negotiation and dialogue roundtable to find solutions, together with national authorities, to the multiple land tenure conflicts affecting communities in the region.

In May 2018, Luis Arturo Marroquin, a member of the national coordination of the Committee for Campesino Development (Comité de Desarrollo Campesino, CODECA) was fatally shot in San Luis Jilotepeque, in the central eastern part of Guatemala. This incident took place a week after President Jimmy Morales referred to CODECA in a disrespectful way in a public speech on 2 May and discredited their activities.

In 2014, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ordered Guatemala to adopt and implement a comprehensive public policy for the protection of human rights defenders in the judgement in the case 'Human Rights Defender vs Guatemala'. Despite some progress, the process to create the public policy hasn't concluded yet. Impunity remains the rule in most cases of threats and attacks against Guatemalan defenders.

The justice system is also regularly misused to criminalize human rights defenders, in an attempt to break up movements and organizations, wearing down the defenders and removing them from the public arena. For more information, see the Amnesty International report *"We are defending the land with our blood": Defenders of the land, territory and environment in Honduras and Guatemala*

(<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr01/4562/2016/en/>) and *Americas: State Protection Mechanisms for Human Rights Defenders*

(<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr01/6211/2017/en/>).