

July 24, 2009.

Licenciado
Ástor Escalante Saravia
Acting Attorney General
Attorney General's Office
Republic of El Salvador

Dear Licenciado Escalante:

The undersigned international organizations would like to express our profound concern for the kidnapping and brutal assassination of Gustavo Marcelo Rivera Moreno—activist and community leader from the city of San Isidro in the province of Cabañas. We appreciate the steps taken by the Civil National Police (PNC) and the Attorney General's Office that have led to the arrest of four suspects. However we consider it of the utmost importance to deepen the investigation in a timely manner in order to bring to justice the intellectual authors as well as those who carried out the murder.

As you know, Marcelo Rivera disappeared on Thursday, July 18th after leaving his house for San Salvador. His corpse was found on July 1st in a dry well in the village of Agua Zarca, near the town of Ilobasco. His body showed signs of terrible torture: his face was disfigured and his fingers mutilated. DNA testing had to be done to confirm that the body found was in fact Marcelo's. A forensic report determined that the cause of death was asphyxiation, which occurred more than 72 hours before the autopsy. This evidence suggests that Marcelo's kidnappers may have kept him alive for several days before murdering him.

We are deeply concerned that since four gang members have been considered the key suspects in this crime, the prosecutor's hypothesis is that Marcelo left with these gang members and that his assassination occurred because of a heated discussion after consuming alcoholic beverages. We vehemently reject the statement made by Prosecutor Rodolfo Delgado, who attributed the motives of this crime as "common violence", discarding *a priori* the existence of intellectual authors of this assassination.

We believe there is sufficient evidence to suggest that this crime had political motivations. Marcelo was a strong community leader—he was the founder and director of the *Casa de la Cultura* in San Isidro, a member of the departmental board of the FMLN party and the director of the Association of Friends of San Isidro Cabañas (ASIC). Marcelo tirelessly struggled to protect the environment, opposing industrial mining by the Canadian mining company Pacific Rim in San Isidro. In addition, during the January 2009 municipal elections, Marcelo and other leaders denounced and stopped the electoral fraud that had been planned in his municipality.

As a result of his activism, in recent months Marcelo received death threats, he was a victim of defamatory campaigns and someone attempted to run over him with a car. None of this evidence has been considered in this investigation of the crime motive. In addition the *modus operandi* of

the assassination, characterized by kidnapping and torture, indicates that this was a premeditated crime, with intellectual authors and hired hitmen. We believe that there are serious irregularities that need to be investigated and corrected including the ignoring of the above elements and the slow response of the police in the initial search for Marcelo.

We are indignant and saddened that Salvadorans who are committed to social justice fall victim to this type of violence. Many colleagues of the undersigned organizations had the privilege to work with Marcelo. They were eye witnesses to Marcelo's tireless work and to the joy and hope that he inspired in so many people. It is inspiring to see all the fruits of Marcelo's work from folkloric dances for children to community action workshops.

As members of the international community in solidarity with the people of El Salvador, we are calling on the Office of the Attorney General to carry out an impartial, exhaustive, and effective investigation in order to bring to justice the intellectual and material authors of this horrendous crime. If Marcelo's murder is left in a state of impunity, it will generate a climate of intimidation and uncertainty for social leaders and activists, undermining the advances in the democratic process in El Salvador.

We thank you in advance for looking into this matter. We hope there will be timely justice in this case and that Marcelo's family will be compensated for their loss.

Regards,

Agricultural Missions, Inc.
Alliance for Global Justice
Arlington/Lexington UJP
Arlington-Teosinte Sister City Project
Asociación Cultural MILPA
Asociación Salvadoreña Canadiense de Ottawa (ASCORCAN)
Atlantic Regional Solidarity Network
Austin-Guajoyo Sister City Project
Bangor, Maine - Carasque, El Salvador Sister City Committee
Bend-Condega Friendship Project
Binghamton El Charcón Sister City Project, Binghamton, NY, USA
Binghamton-El Charcon Sister City Project
Bolivia Action Solidarity Network, Ottawa Ontario
Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church
Cambridge-San Jose las Flores Sister City Project
Campaign for Labor Rights
Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)

Canadian Union of Public Employees of ON Solidarity Committee
Canadian Union of Public Employees, Ontario Division
Canadian's Against Mining in El Salvador (CAMES)
Caribbean & Latin America Support Project
Central American Resources Center (CARECEN) San Francisco
Central American Resources Center (CARECEN) Washington DC
Central American Women's Fund
Centro de Intercambio y Solidaridad - CIS
Chicago-Cinquera Sister Cities
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles
Coalition on the Socio-Environmental Impacts of Mining in Latin America, Montreal ON
CoDevelopment Canada
Colombia Action Network
Comité de Solidaridad Monseñor Romero, Washington DC
Comité pour les droits humains en Amérique latine (CDHAL)
Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES)
Community Organizing Center, OH
Doctors for Global Health (Doctores Para la Salud Global)
Ecumenical Program on Central America and the Caribbean (EPICA)
Entraide Missionaire, Montreal, Canada
Fellowship of Reconciliation Task Force on Latin America and the Caribbean
First United Church of Decorah, Iowa's Sister Parish *chapter
FMLN Minnesota
Fisios Mundi
FOCUS Central America--Wichita, Kansas
Friends of Chilama from Crystal Lake
Global Youth Network -- Canada
Good Shepherd Church -El Salvador Ministry, Shawnee, KS
Greater New Haven Peace Council
Grupo No a Pascua-Lama, Montreal, Canada
Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA
Horizons of Friendship Canada
Institute for Global Leadership
Institute for the Study and Practice of Nonviolence
Interconnect Newsletter
International Partners
KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives
Kansan-Salvadoran Solidarity Action
Kitchener-Waterloo Mayan Project
Labor/Community Strategy Center
L'APPEL France
Latin America Solidarity Coalition (LASC)
Latin American Canadian Solidarity Association (LACASA), LONDON, ON

Latin American Solidarity Network-Toronto
Latin American/Caribbean Committee of the Loretto Community
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Los Amates and the Garden State, NJ, USA
Madison Arcatao Sister City Project
Madison-Rafah Sister City Project (Palestine), Madison, Wisconsin
Manhattan Alliance for Peace and Justice
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Maryland Presbyterian Church
Mining Watch Canada
Missionary Oblates -Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation
National Immigrant Solidarity Network
National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association
Nicaragua Center for Community Action
Nicaragua Network
North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA)
North Country Coalition for Justice and Peace, St. Johnsbury, Vermont, USA
Oberlin in Solidarity with El Salvador, Oberlin, OH
Office of the Americas:
Ontario Public Research Interest Group (OPIRG) Carleton
Pax Christi Northeast Florida
Pax Christi USA: National Catholic Peace Movement
Peace through International Community Action (PICA)
Progressio - El Salvador
Psicologi per i Popoli – Torino
Quixote Center
Resurrection Lutheran Church
Salvadoran American National Association (SANA)
Salvadoran Canadian Association of Toronto (ASALCA)
SalvAide
School of the Americas Watch
SHARE Foundation: Building a New El Salvador Today
Sister Parish
St. John Fisher Catholic Community Justice and Peace Ministry
St. Sebastian Parish - El Salvador Committee
Task Force on the Americas
Territorio Libre, Ottawa Ontario
The Detroit SHARE Sister Community Committee
The Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Ceremony
The Romero Interfaith Center
The Windsor Las Vueltas Twin City Project
US-El Salvador Sister Cities
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
Voices on the Border
Wisconsin Resources Protection Council of La Crosse, Wisconsin
Women's Community House~London ON