



## Stop the Killing of Women in Guatemala!

Dear Human Rights Activist,

We need your help to seek justice from the Guatemalan authorities in the cases of nearly 2,200 women and girls who have been murdered since 2001. Please take action to stem the tide of these killings, to ensure effective prosecution of these crimes, and to promote women's human rights in Guatemala.

### Background

In June 2005, in response to escalating rates of abductions, torture and murders of women and girls, Amnesty International (AI) released the report "*No Protection, No Justice: The Killings of Women in Guatemala.*" The past year has seen growing international and national concern about the frequency and brutality of the killings. In response to pressure from NGOs and governments, the Guatemalan authorities have taken some important steps. They have created the National Commission to Address Femicide; passed a law creating a National Forensic Institute; allocated increased resources to investigate murdered women's cases; and started to professionalize crime scene investigations. Guatemalan lawmakers temporarily suspended a discriminatory legal provision regarding criminal responsibility for rape, and are drafting Penal Code reforms in relation to violence against women.

AI welcomes the steps taken thus far by the Guatemala government. However, AI is deeply concerned that despite these efforts, the rate of killings continues to increase. Nearly 300 women and girls were killed between January and June 2006. AI is also concerned that impunity for killing women and girls continues to be the norm in Guatemala. Of the 665 murders committed during 2005, only two cases have led to convictions, and 99% of the cases have never even reached the courts. In addition, the quality of investigations, including the collection and preservation of forensic evidence, continues to be inadequate. Many reports reach AI about lost or damaged evidence, and failures to interview witnesses and follow other leads. There is no effective response capacity for women and girls reported missing. Police, prosecutors and other authorities continue to use discriminatory terms and practices in cases of murdered women.

These abductions and killings are just one symptom of the serious discrimination and violence that Guatemalan women and girls face in every aspect of their lives. As the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) said on June 2, 2006, the continuing and increasing cases of disappearances, rape, torture and murders of women are related to an ingrained culture of impunity for such crimes, and represent grave and systematic violations of women's human rights.

Amnesty International renews its call on the Guatemalan Government to demonstrate its political will to stop these killings by ensuring the full cooperation of all relevant state institutions, and by providing the necessary gender training, technical assistance, and resources to bring the perpetrators of each and every abduction and murder to justice.

**Take Action!** Send letters to Guatemala's President, Óscar Berger Perdomo, urging him to promote concrete and immediate investigations of these killings, and to take other specific steps to stop not only the killings, but also all violence and discrimination against Guatemalan women.

Presidente de la República de Guatemala  
Licenciado Oscar Berger Perdomo  
Casa Presidencial, 6a Avenida, 4-18 Zona 1  
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala  
Fax: +502 2383 8390

Dear President Berger:

I am deeply concerned about the continued increase in the number of women and girls who have been brutally murdered in Guatemala since 2001. To date, nearly 2,200 women and girls have been killed, yet very few cases have been investigated or prosecuted, and only a handful of cases have resulted in convictions.

I welcome the news reported by Amnesty International that Guatemala has recently created a National Commission to Address Femicide, a National Forensic Institute to aid investigations, and a commission to investigate police abuses against women. Also, I applaud the Guatemalan Congress for suspending, at least temporarily, some highly discriminatory legal provisions, and for drafting legislation to end both discrimination against women and impunity for the perpetrators of crimes against women. However, I am concerned that the draft legislation has not been approved, and that so far, few positive results have been reported despite these important initiatives.

First, I urge you to take all steps necessary to ensure prompt and effective forensic investigations of these crimes. I ask that you ensure the necessary resources, including training and technical assistance, are available to police investigators and prosecutors.

Second, I urge you to ensure that all necessary resources are available to the newly created Commission to Address Femicide, enabling Commissioners to improve coordination of state institutions responsible for preventing, investigating and prosecuting the killings of women. To be sustainable and effective, the Commission should have civil society representation. I am also concerned that the new Commission not duplicate initiatives already underway by the National Board for the Prevention of Violence and Eradication of Interfamily Violence and Violence against Women (CONAPREVI) and the National Plan for the Eradication of Violence against Women (PLANOVI). All these initiatives must have sufficient resources and political support to end violence against women in Guatemala.

Third, while acknowledging progress by Congress, I am concerned that many discriminatory laws continue in force in Guatemala. I hope you will urge Congress to approve promptly the pending legislation to criminalize sexual harassment. I also hope you will press for the approval of draft law No. 2630, which abolishes some of the existing discriminatory legal provisions in Guatemala, and criminalizes acts of violence against women.

In closing, I urge you to encourage renewed efforts by all relevant state agencies and authorities to reaffirm their commitment to women's rights, to focus all possible resources on stopping the killings of women and girls, and bring those responsible to justice. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you about these important concerns.

Sincerely,

Name:  
Address  
City, State: