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Mr President Otto Perez Molina,

In August 2013, Public Services International (PSI) organized an international mission to Guatemala. You and the Minister of Interior and Minister of Labour together met with our delegation on Wednesday 14 August 2013. During this meeting, you acknowledged that "It is very shameful for us that our country is the most dangerous country in the world for trade unionists."

Today, we write to you to express our deep concern with the lack of progress made to date in relation to the cases of the 58 murdered trade unionists and in particular with the three most recent murders of Carlos Hernandez and Santa Alvarado of SNTSG (National Health Workers' Union of Guatemala) and Kyra Zulueta Enríquez Mena (Union of the Municipality of Nueva Concepción).

Unfortunately we also have to express strong protest in relation to new incidents this week reported by the SNTSG:

1. On 2 October at 15:00, Melvy Lizeth Camey Rojas, the Secretary of SNTSG Health Center of Chiquimulilla in the Department of Santa Rosa was in fear of her life for the second time, when armed men with nine-millimeter pistols on a motorcycle came looking for her at her workplace, probably with the intention to kill. According to witnesses, these people shared a lot of similarities with the murderers who killed Labor Advisor Attorney Ricardo Morataya Lemus with several gunshots, while seriously injuring Rojas last July.
2. On 6 October at 8am, Genaro Cruz Telón of Chinebal in Izabal region, former secretary and member of the SNTSG, was seriously wounded in a brutal attack. Jorge Benjamin Cuc Caal from Chinebal has been charged. Mr Cruz is in a coma due to his injuries.
3. On 6 October, the General Secretary of the Children's Hospital and Rehabilitation, Mauricia Garcia Ruiz received a death threat, and on 7 October the Organizing Secretary of the Executive Committee of the SNTSG, Dora Regina Ruano received death threats against herself and her children, via telephone.
4. On October 11, Juan Jose Ortiz, SNTSG member and Financial Secretary of the Health Centre of Barberena Santa Rosa, was kidnapped on his way to the city centre. For more than 24 hours he was held captive, threatened and tortured. On 12 October, he was bundled into a car for a short drive, his eyes were then uncovered and he was left in the centre of Barberena. Mr Ortiz does not remember much of what happened; he was apparently drugged and received cigarette burns on his eyelids and eyebrows. He fears for his life and that of his family.

Given these alarming events, we urge that you as President and the authorities of the Public Ministry, the National Police, and the Ministry of Interior order an immediate and thorough investigation into these cowardly acts and use the full extent of the law so that those responsible are arrested and tried promptly.

Increased efforts are needed, especially in terms of strengthening research and investigative cooperation between the Office of the Attorney General and the police. These recent violations will also be made known to the International Labour Organization and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

We also demand immediate support, security measures and state protection for the trade unionists who are being threatened today: Genaro Cruz Telón, Melvy Lizeth Camey Rojas, Mauricia Garcia Ruiz and Dora Regina Ruano.

We want to emphasize that these actions appear to be part of a concerted campaign of terror against trade union leaders – particularly targeting women leaders. It's a double shame that the law on femicide in Guatemala is grossly abused to target trade unionists. Thirty union leaders are jailed on charges of femicide, including those linked to deaths caused by lack of drugs and deplorable conditions in hospitals.

In the last few months a number of institutions have been created that involve trade unions. However, we ask you to commit to social dialogue beyond formal contacts and consultative procedures. Your government must recognize the role social partners can play in the economic and social recovery of your country. Without this commitment, no progress can be made.

Furthermore, we call on you to take all necessary measures to implement the recommendations of the Committee of Experts of the ILO in order to bring your national legislation into conformity with Convention No. 87. This means, in the first place, honouring collective bargaining agreements that have already been signed and consulting with social partners on proposed changes to the Labour Code.

In addition, we remind you that in the framework of the Campaign against Impunity in Guatemala of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and as Public Services International (PSI), we strongly condemn these acts of violence against trade union leaders of the SNTSG, whose physical and emotional well-being, as well as that of their families, is increasingly threatened.

We will work with our unions, the Council of Global Unions, and elected leaders in nations around the world – including the United States and the European Union – to call for trade relations with Guatemala to be stopped until these deadly attacks against trade unionists and the impunity of the perpetrators of violence have ended once and for all.

Sincerely,



Rosa Pavanelli
General Secretary

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