



Dr. Carlos Castresana
International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala
Apartado Postal 934 "A"
Ciudad de Guatemala,
Guatemala

September 16, 2008

Dear Dr. Castresana:

The Foundation for Forensic Anthropology in Guatemala ("FAFG") has informed the Committee for Human Rights of the American Anthropological Association that FAFG's Deputy Director, Mr. José Suasnavar, recently received four messages containing direct threats of physical harm or death. Mr. Suasnavar received these messages from unknown persons whose goal is to impede the human rights work the FAFG anthropologists have undertaken in exhuming the mass graves of Guatemala's Missing that resulted from its internal armed conflict which lasted from 1960-1996. These threats arrived approximately two months after similar threats of death and dismemberment were received by FAFG's Director, Mr. Peccerelli, his family, and other members of FAFG. These threats also follow threats that the organization has received since 2002. Printed copies of the relevant e-mails are enclosed with this correspondence for your review.

We formally brought our démarche to the attention of the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala ("CICIG") last month. In brief, we asked that the (1) civil police increase and improve their security efforts, (2) the *Ministerio Público* would open a new investigation into the threats which would include cyber crime, and (3) that the state's investigative documents would be provided to CICIG. To date, as far as we know, nothing has been done to investigate the death threats received by FAFG members.

Crime, no matter its impetus, left uninvestigated and unimpeded only escalates in severity. Perpetrators of crime that act with impunity move from using verbal abuses to scare and threaten their victims, to the destruction of inanimate objects, and finally they graduate to the infliction of bodily harm or death. Furthermore, the lack of investigation into the threats affects the motivation and ability of international human rights workers to offer their experience and expertise to the state. As such, we write this letter in order to formally request an investigation into the threats received by FAFG.

Our hope is that the CICIG can bring the specter of unbiased accountability to these circumstances and help the state to identify and prosecute the perpetrators of these threats. If that can be accomplished, then FAFG can continue its work unimpeded by considerable security concerns and expand its efforts to decrease the persistence of violent behaviors that are severely damaging Guatemalan society and its fledgling democratic institutions. Thank you in advance for your consideration of these very important matters.

Sincerely,

Victoria Sanford, Ph.D.
Chair, American Anthropological Association Committee for Human Rights