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Australia

His Excellency Alvaro Colom
President of the Republic of Guatemala
Guatemala

Re: General Elections September 11

Dear Mr President,

We are most concerned that the General Elections due to be held in Guatemala on September 11 this year should be a fair, transparent process without violence or intimidation.

We have received reports of the assassination of candidates and members of opposition parties in various parts in recent weeks in your country.

There is evidence that seems to incriminate the armed forces of your country which is of concern.

It is universally accepted that elections can only be recognised as democratic and genuine if they reflect the wishes of the majority of the people of a country.

Your Government's role must, of course, be to ensure that the September 11th general elections are carried out properly and are free from violence, intimidation and bribery.

We do not underestimate the complexity and depth of the many problems confronting Guatemala at this time. However, a violent and unfair election cannot and will not contribute to the resolution of any of these problems.

The international reputation of Guatemala will be on display on September 11th and could be seriously undermined by violence or any interference in the election process.

We would strongly suggest that one way to ensure a proper and democratic election would be to invite the United Nations to send international observers.

We have asked the Australian Government to pay attention to the electoral process. We are also contacting Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch with a request that they also closely observe the general election.

Finally, we will be watching with interest for reports on how the election is being conducted. Any mal practice by the army, your government or other forces will be observed by many people from around the world.

We express our hope that your Government will take all the steps necessary to ensure that the September 11th general elections are free and fair.

Yours sincerely,

Cc: Dr Sergio Fernando Morales
Guatemalan Ombudsman
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