

January 10, 2006

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush:

In October 2005, severe floods and mudslides caused by Hurricane Stan devastated parts of Central America and southern Mexico. We write to encourage a generous U.S. response, and urge you to provide additional reconstruction assistance to affected countries and grant Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Guatemalans and renew TPS for Salvadorans living in the United States.

Guatemala was most severely affected by Hurricane Stan; entire communities were buried by mudslides. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that over 600 people were killed and over 800 remained missing at the end of October. Almost 35,000 houses were damaged or destroyed and approximately 475,000 people were affected by the storm. El Salvador suffered through a volcanic explosion, then was hit by Stan. Seventy-one people died, and more than 72,000 people were evacuated to shelters. There was damage as well in southern Mexico, along the Mexico-Guatemala border.

Three months later, Central Americans face a serious food shortage due to destruction of crops and livelihoods. The United Nations World Food Programme has issued an urgent appeal to donors to help feed an estimated 285,000 victims of Hurricane Stan, facing a severe hunger crisis this winter.

A practical way in which the United States can help Central Americans help themselves is to provide Temporary Protected Status to Guatemalans and renew TPS for Salvadorans living in the United States, who together send an estimated \$4.5 billion per year in remittances to their families. Their contributions to the reconstruction of their countries are essential, and we strongly urge you to grant TPS, as soon as possible, in light of the magnitude of the disaster facing the region. While we recognize the political sensitivities involved, this one action could contribute substantially to reconstruction.

In addition, we believe the United States should designate additional reconstruction assistance beyond the development assistance included in the FY06 budget, which maintains aid to Central America at previous year levels. We appreciate that USAID has provided some emergency assistance but believe that a substantial increase is necessary for Guatemala and El Salvador. Given the series of humanitarian crises around the world in the last several months, we are deeply concerned that the response to Hurricane Stan has not been adequate. We are

convinced that the United States must make a more generous response to this year's terrible natural disasters, both in our own country and abroad.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Rajyashri Waghray
Director, Education and Advocacy
Church World Service

Richard Parkins
Director
Episcopal Migration Ministries

Joy Olson
Executive Director
Washington Office on Latin America

J. Daryl Byler
Director
**Mennonite Central Committee
U.S. Washington Office**

Richard Erstad
Director, Latin American and Caribbean
Regional Program
American Friends Service Committee

The Rev. Cally Rogers-Witte
Executive Minister
**Wider Church Ministries
United Church of Christ**

Tara Carr-Lemke
Washington, DC Policy Office Director
**SHARE Foundation: Building a New El
Salvador Today**

Adam Isacson
Director of Programs
Center for International Policy

Charlie Clements
President
**Unitarian Universalist Service
Committee**

Neil Greenbaum
President & CEO
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)

Rev. Elenora Giddings Ivory
Director, Washington Office
Presbyterian Church (USA)

James E. Winkler
General Secretary
**General Board of Church and Society
United Methodist Church**

Raymond C. Offenheiser
President
Oxfam America

Mary Catherine Rabbitt, SL
President
Sisters of Loretto/Loretto Community

Marie Dennis
Director
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Simone Campbell, SSS
National Coordinator
**NETWORK, a National Catholic Social
Justice Lobby**

Maricela Garcia
President
**National Coalition of Guatemalan
Organizations (CONGUATE)**

Barbara Gerlach
Colombia Liaison
**United Church of Christ Justice and
Witness Ministries**

Rev. Dr. James B. Vigen
Director for International Relations and
Human Rights
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in
America, Washington Office**

Seamus P. Finn, OMI
Director
**Oblate Justice and Peace/Integrity of
Creation Office**

Patricia Davis
**Guatemala Human Rights
Commission/USA**

Marcia Soto
President
**Confederación de Federaciones
Mexicanas del Medio Oeste**

Claudia Lucero
Vice-President
Durango Unido en Chicago

Mark L. Berenson
Co-Director
**Committee for Inter-American Human
Rights**

John Lindsay-Poland
Director
**Fellowship of Reconciliation Task
Force on Latin America and the
Caribbean**

Bob Schwartz
Executive Director
Disarm Education Fund

Mónica C. Larenas
Program Officer
Fund for Nonviolence

Doug Hellinger
Executive Director
The Development GAP

T. Michael McNulty, SJ
Justice and Peace Director
**Conference of Major Superiors of Men
(CMSM)**

Emily S. Goldman
Senior Program Officer
**Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for
Human Rights**

Andrew de Sousa
National Organizer
**Network in Solidarity with the People of
Guatemala**

Richard Kamp
Director
Border Ecology Project

Tanya Snyder
Executive Director
Voices on the Border

Stephen Coats
Executive Director
**U.S./Labor Education in the Americas
Project**

Rev. David A. Vargas
President
**Division of Overseas Ministries
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**

Elaine Nonneman
Trustee
Channel Foundation

Harold M. Baron
Chairman of the Board
**Foundation for Self-Sufficiency in
Central America**

Todd Flory
Legislative Associate
Brethren Witness/Washington Office

Cc: Adolfo Franco, Assistant Administrator, Latin America and Caribbean Bureau, USAID
David E. Lindwall, Director, Office of Central American Affairs, U.S. State Department
Robert Divine, Acting Deputy Director, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services,
Department of Homeland Security

To respond to this letter, please reply to Lisa Haugaard, Executive Director, Latin America Working
Group. 424 C Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002 lisah@lawg.org Ph: 202-546-7010 F: 202-543-
764

