

23 June 2016

Guatemala - Assassination of human rights defender Brenda Marleni Estrada Tambito

On 19 June 2016, human rights defender Ms **Brenda Marleni Estrada Tambito** was shot 5 times and killed as she drove through Guatemala City.

[Brenda Marleni Estrada Tambito](#) was a member of the **Coalition of Workers' Unions of Guatemala (*Unión Sindical de Trabajadores de Guatemala - UNSITRAGUA*)** and the Sub-Coordinator of the Legal Aid Commission within the Union. The human rights defender was the daughter of lawyer Jorge Estrada, a long time member of UNSITRAGUA. Both have been strong advocates for labour rights in Guatemala. Present nationwide, UNSITRAGUA brings together workers' unions from the manufacturing, services and agricultural industries as well as self-employed workers and independent farmers.

On the evening of 19 June 2016, between 5:30 pm and 6 pm, Brenda Marleni Estrada Tambito was driving through Zone 1 in Guatemala City when a vehicle drove up next to her. The occupants of the vehicle then opened fire. The human rights defender was hit by 5 bullets and died at the scene of the attack. Prior to her assassination she had driven her father, Jorge Estrada, to a bus terminal where he would travel to Puerto Barrios, Izabal. Although the human rights defender had not been threatened before the attack, it should be noted that her father, Jorge Estrada, is currently involved in investigating and assessing labour rights in several banana plantations across Izabal.

The killing of Brenda Marleni Estrada Tambito is the latest murder of a human rights defender in Guatemala this month, amongst other wide-ranging efforts to threaten, intimidate and silence human rights defenders. In the vast majority of cases the killings of human rights defenders remain unpunished and those fighting against impunity are threatened. On 21 June 2016, human rights defender Mr [Alejandro Rodríguez](#) from Impunity Watch received threats from an anonymous female caller due to his work on securing accountability for crimes committed during the Guatemalan civil war. On the same day, his office was ransacked by a group of three men and a member of his staff was assaulted. Alejandro Rodríguez currently represents the Molina Theissen family in a case that accuses four members of the military of crimes against humanity, forced disappearance and rape.

This year alone Front Line Defenders has already reported on the killing of 2 other human rights defenders. Earlier this month, human rights defender [Daniel Choc Pop](#), an indigenous and land rights defender in San Juan Tres Ríos, Cobán, was repeatedly shot and killed. Previously in March 2016, [Walter Méndez Barrios](#), a well known environmental rights defender, was shot and killed outside his home in Las Cruces, Petén. In 2015, Front Line Defenders reported the killing of 4 human rights defenders and 2 family members. The overall environment for human rights defenders in the country has become increasingly tense and dangerous, with killings being the most extreme form of repression but not the only one.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the brutal murder of Brenda Marleni Estrada Tambito and calls on the State of Guatemala to bring the perpetrators to justice. Front Line Defenders is also concerned by the hostile environment for human rights defenders, including threats and break-ins such as the ones staged against Alejandro Rodríguez.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Guatemala to:

1. Strongly condemn the killing of Brenda Marleni Estrada Tambito;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of Brenda Marleni Estrada Tambito, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Brenda Marleni Estrada Tambito's family, in particular her father José Estrada;
4. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the intimidation and threats made against Mr Alejandro Rodríguez, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
5. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Guatemala are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all undue restrictions.