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RFK Memorial Denounces Murder of Pepe Méndez, Calls for Special Prosecutor

RFK Memorial expresses its deepest condolences to the family of José Emanuel "Pepe" Méndez, son of 1990 RFK Human Rights Award winner Amílcar Méndez Urizar

WASHINGTON DC—The Robert F. Kennedy Memorial strongly denounces the murder of José Emanuel "Pepe" Méndez, son of 1990 RFK Human Rights Award winner Amílcar Méndez Urizar. Pepe Méndez was shot to death in Guatemala City on the afternoon of August 17th, 2007 by assailants with high caliber weapons.

"The Robert F. Kennedy Memorial and human rights advocates around the world are shocked and deeply saddened by Pepe Méndez 's murder. We stand in solidarity with Amílcar and his family during this very difficult time," said Monika Kalra Varma, director of the RFK Memorial's Center for Human Rights.

For most of his life, Pepe Méndez worked with his father, a longtime human rights defender working with Guatemalan indigenous communities. RFK Memorial is concerned that Pepe Méndez 's death may be associated with these activities. Pepe Méndez received a number of death threats, including within the last month, which were reported to Guatemala's Human Rights Prosecutor's Office.

As elections approach, Guatemala has witnessed a number of high profile murders of public figures and activists. The perpetrators have been able to act with impunity, despite denunciations by the Guatemalan human rights community.

"We urge the Guatemalan government to name a Special Prosecutor to immediately investigate Pepe Méndez 's murder and those of activists and politicians in recent weeks," said Varma.

Source: Robert F. Kennedy Memorial (www.rfkmemorial.org)

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