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CONFIDENTIAL

INTER-AMERICAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

APARTADO #6906-100

SAN JOSE

COSTA RICA

FAX # (506) 234-0584

ATTENTION:

MR. VICTOR M. RODRIGUEZ RESCIA, SECRETARY

RE: YOUR REFERENCE: CDH-10.154/374

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Mr. Victor M. Rodriguez Rescia, Secretary
Inter-American Court of Human Rights
Apartado #6906-100, San Jose, Costa Rica
FAX # (506) 234-0584

August 27, 1998

German Giovanni Paniagua
8 Flint Drive
Belleville, Ontario
Canada, K8N 5G3

Dear Mr. Robles:

I am writing in reply to your recent correspondence.

I was born July 14, 1964 in Guatemala City, Guatemala, to Maria Alfonsa Morales and Alberto Paniagua. I come from a very large family. I was brought up in the Catholic faith and was instilled at an early age with a "work hard" ethic. Nothing came easily to my family. We all worked very hard to achieve our goals.

I can remember that as a child growing up in Guatemala I didn't have much. Our family was not rich however nor were we poor. The one thing we did have was lots of love and we were all very close. My sister Anna and I were especially close. She used to call me "megustas" and I looked up to her as my mentor. Anna was the one who told me I could do anything, become anything, I wanted and she made me believe it.

My mother and father worked very hard to provide for their large family. My father was a woodworker and carpenter and as soon as we boys were old enough he taught us the trade of carpentry. I started working with my Dad when I was twelve years old. I am using the carpentry skills he taught me as a boy in Guatemala to make my living here in Canada. But I'm getting ahead of myself here. My mother ran a cafeteria to make money and each one of us children did our part to help her out. My expertise was in chopping vegetables.

My parents encouraged all of us to attend school and make something of ourselves and for those of us who wanted more than grammar school education my parents worked especially hard to make our goals reality. Anna was the first to attend The University of San Carlos. She studied accounting, got married, had children, the usual life one would expect. My sister Carolina and I had continued our studies and we had both become teachers.

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In February 1988 Anna, Carolina and I were all attending classes at the University of San Carlos in Guatemala City. Anna wanted to improve her accounting after the birth of my niece, Maria Elisa, and so she was taking accounting courses. Carolina had also decided to take accounting at the suggestion of Anna and I was attending The University of San Carlos studying Law. On February 11, 1988 all of our lives were forever changed by the kidnapping and killing of my sister Anna. It was a well known fact that many students attending The University of San Carlos were murdered. Many others simply disappeared and one never quite knew if they were also murdered or if they had gone into hiding in fear of being murdered. My entire family was devastated by Anna's death. My sister Carolina and I were absolutely terrified that we too would be murdered. We buried my sister Anna with an escort of body guards to protect us from any assassination attempt. The next day Carolina and I fled to the Canadian Embassy in Guatemala City to seek asylum in Canada. My brother Hugo fled to the United States as did my sister Blanca. We did not dare to all seek asylum in the same place.

I left my home, my family, my friends, my personal belongings, in fact my entire life in one single day. Words cannot begin to express the terror we felt. The terror of being murdered; the terror of being separated from our family at a time when we needed to be together to grieve; the terror of not knowing where we were going or what the future held. I went from being a school teacher and law student to a man who owned nothing and who no longer even had a country. In Canada the government assisted with loans, which were eventually repaid, to try and get our lives in order. I could not even speak English well enough to obtain employment in Canada when I arrived. I missed my home and still miss my home. My personal belongings were all gone. All I carried with me were my teaching certificate and my school papers.

Here in Canada my teaching credentials were reviewed eventually by the Ontario Government and although my teaching skills were all acceptable the Government of Ontario wanted me to take ten courses at university here in Canada to give me the equivalent of a Bachelor of Arts Degree. I could not, and still cannot, bring myself to attend a university. The thought of stepping on campus terrifies me still. There are too many horrible memories of friends disappeared and Anna's murder. I cannot help but wonder "What if?" What if I had gone to the store for milk instead of Anna that morning. Would I have been the one murdered?

I eventually married a Canadian woman who strives daily to understand me. She is not of my culture. We do not speak the same language in more ways than one but we get through

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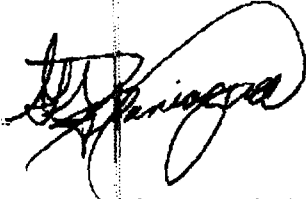
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each day one at a time. The nights are the hardest thing to get through because the nightmares still come and I wake up screaming and then I cannot get back to sleep and all the memories flood my brain until I simply cry. My wife cries with me because she loves me and doesn't know what to do to help me. Anna's death will haunt me forever.

I should now be a lawyer in my homeland with a wife from my own culture and several children. I should be practising Law. Instead, I am a citizen of a country that doesn't speak my native tongue. I have gone from job to job doing menial labour instead of using my education to teach others. I do not socialize well. My wife and I have many acquaintances but no real friends because I cannot trust anyone. My trust in my fellow man was shattered the day my sister was murdered.

There is a very large difference in what my life should be and what my life actually is. All that I had worked so hard for was taken away by the Government of Guatemala the day they had my sister murdered. The Government of Guatemala and the men of the "Death Squad" should be made to pay for what they have done to me and my family. They should be made to pay for what they did to many families in Guatemala.

Yours sincerely,



German Giovanni Paniagua.

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