TIPS FOR WRITING ACTION ALERTS

“Action Alerts” or “Urgent Actions” are a primary tool for responding to a human rights crisis. The goal is to:
- mobilize a large number of people
- in a short amount of time
- to focus pressure on specific authorities
- through simple, straightforward action (i.e. writing letters, sending faxes, making phone calls)

The hope is that enough pressure will result in a cessation of the abuse.

An “URGENT ACTION” is the highest form of alert. It is used to get immediate action to address a specific crisis situation (i.e. someone arrested/jailed; specific home demolition imminent, etc.)

An “ACTION ALERT” addresses a more generalized crisis situation in which people can be mobilized to respond over a period of weeks (i.e. increase in land confiscation, further displacement of indigenous due to paramilitary violence and threats, etc.)

A “PRAYER ALERT” mobilizes people to undergird a situation in prayer (i.e. rumors of planned attacks, nonviolent marches or vigils or campaigns, etc.)

In writing an action alert, be sure to:

1. State the details of the event briefly and accurately:
   a. Who (names), what (general description), where (place), when (date and time)
   b. 1-2 paragraphs

2. State the action you wish people to take – identify one clear response; (1 paragraph)

3. Include sufficient background information (several paragraphs) so that people feel confident enough to respond; offer a website address or other source of additional information for those interested;

4. Provide accurate contact information:
   a. test all addresses, phone and fax numbers and e-mail addresses for accuracy before releasing your alert;
   b. prioritize your contacts in order of importance
      (1) suggest two main contacts rather than a whole long list
      (2) label your contact list “in order of priority”
   c. be clear about where to send copies (i.e. CPT office, local team, etc.)

5. Clarify why it’s urgent – how will people’s response make a difference?