

via Fax:011 502.238.17.34
Don Jorge Eduardo De León Duque
Prosecutor for Human Rights
Guatemala City, Guatemala

July 26, 2015

Dear Sr. De León Duque:

We are extremely concerned about the detention of **Bernardo Ermitaño López Reyes** and the legal proceedings against him. López Reyes is a leader of civil society in Santa Cruz Barillas in Huehuetenango Department and a member of the Council of Mayan Peoples (CPO).

On June 2, he attended the legal proceedings against the arbitrary detention of environmental rights defenders Sotero Adalberto Villatoro, Francisco Juan Pedro and Arturo Pablo Juan for unsubstantiated accusations made against them on April 23, 2013 by an employee of Hidro Santa Cruz, a Guatemalan subsidiary of a Spanish company developing hydroelectric projects in northern Huehuetenango. The company is carrying out its work in the face of strong opposition from indigenous peoples in the municipality, who believe that their rights to prior consultation, as well as environmental rights, have been violated by the company.

As López Reyes left the court building on June 2, he was arrested and immediately transferred to the holding cells of the building. On June 4 he was transferred to Huehuetenango under guard of 30 PNC officers. On June 9, at the Court of First Instance in Huehuetenango, he was presented with multiple charges including assault, illicit association, threats, the incitement of crime, the obstruction of justice, plagiarism and abduction and ordered into preventative detention. The next date set for his trial is August 24.

López Reyes has acted as a facilitator and mediator in dialogue between the government institutions and community groups in Barillas and northern Huehuetenango where large-scale, government-supported development projects are widely opposed by local populations because they violate human and environmental rights including failure to have local consultations prior to project operations.

The detention and legal proceedings of López Reyes are a clear attempt to halt his legitimate work in the defense of human rights, and to dissuade communities from attempting to exercise their rights. Therefore we **strongly urge** that you

- immediately and unconditionally release Bernardo Ermitaño López Reyes and drop all charges against him;
- guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

Sincerely,

Christine Stonebraker-Martinez
Co-Coordinator

CC: José Julio Alejandro Ligorria Carballido, Guatemalan Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202 745 1908
Todd Robinson, US Ambassador to Guatemala ~ via fax: 011 502 2326 4000
James Cavallaro, Rapporteur for Guatemala, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights~ via fax: (202)458-3992
Caitlyn Kennel, Guatemala Desk, US State Dept ~ via email: ~ KennelCK@state.gov
Rose Marie Belle-Antoine, Rapporteur for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax 202 458 3650
Christopher Johnson, Diplomacy Officer for Central America, US State Dept. ~ via email
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

Frontline 6/12/2015_Guatemala

The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: