

via fax: 011 502 2411 8168 or 2411 9210
Lic. Thelma Esperanza Aldana Hernández
 Attorney General of Guatemala

via email: frivas@mingob.gob.gt
Sr. Francisco Rivas Lara
 Minister of the Interior of Guatemala

June 25, 2017

Dear Attorney General Aldana and Minister of the Interior Rivas:

We are outraged at the killing of **Carlos Maaz Coc**, a 27-year old indigenous Maya-Q'eqchi' fisherman, an environmental and land rights defender and a member of the Artisanal Fishermen's Guild (GPA). He was killed on May 27 while participating in a peaceful demonstration calling for government action to resolve the contamination of Lake Izabal in El Estor, Izabal Department, polluted by nickel mining.

On May 27 the Guatemalan government unilaterally abandoned negotiations with GPA, which had been organized in an attempt to find a solution to the problems of the community caused by mining activities which affect their land and endanger their livelihood. At approximately 3:00pm, the people of El Estor decided to conduct a peaceful demonstration by closing the road that leads to the mining facilities in the department of Alta Verapaz. The Ministry of the Interior ordered the deployment of the National Civil Police to the region. The disproportionate use of force by the riot police (NPC), including the use of rubber bullets, live ammunition, gas bombs and sound bombs, led directly to the shooting death of Carlos Maaz Coc, as well as injuries to many others. Several Guatemalan officials, including Minister of the Environment, Sydney Samuels, have publicly denied the killing.

In 2006, the Guatemalan government issued mining licenses to the Guatemalan Nickel Company (CGN), owned by the Canadian company HudBay Minerals, Inc. The government failed to inform or seek permission from the indigenous residents of El Estor, a requirement stated in the International Labour Organization Convention 169. The mining company and government have continued to violate the rights of the indigenous people in El Estor. Abelino Chub Caal, an indigenous Maya-Q'eqchi' defender, has been in detention since February 4 awaiting judgment on the false charges of aggravated land grabbing, arson, coercion, illicit association, and belonging to illicit armed groups (cf our letter of Feb 24).

Because we are extremely concerned at the continued persecution of indigenous land rights defenders, we **strongly urge** that you

- publicly condemn the killing of Carlos Maaz Coc and carry out an immediate, thorough, and impartial investigation of his killing, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice
- take all necessary measures, in consultation with the defenders, to guarantee the security of El Estor Maya-Q'eqchi' communities, including members of GPA
- immediately act to ensure compliance with all binding laws and agreements with respect to the rights of indigenous communities

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator

copies: Gladys Marithza Ruiz de Veilman, Ambassador of Guatemala to the US ~ via fax 202 745 1908
 Todd D. Robinson, US Ambassador to Guatemala ~ via human rights officer Rain Bian
 Guatemala Desk, US State Dept: Thomas Lee ~ via email
 James Cavallaro, Rapporteur for Guatemala, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
 Francisco José Erguiguren Praeli, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous People, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

Frontline_5/31/2017_Guatemala

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