

via email: TAldana@mp.gob.gt Lic. Thelma Esperanza Aldana Hernández Attorney General of Guatemala	via email: SMVasquez@mingob.gob.gt and FRivas@mingob.gob.gt Sr. Francisco Manuel Rivas Lara Minister of Interior of Guatemala
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July 1, 2017

Dear Attorney General Aldana and Interior Minister Rivas:

We are very angry and concerned about the **excessive use of force by police in response to a peaceful protest against a mining project in Casillas** in San Rafael las Flores in Santa Rosa Department.

Starting June 8, representatives from six municipalities maintained a peaceful encampment along the highway in Casillas, 15 kilometers from the entrance to the Escobal mine, a project of the US-Canadian company Tahoe Resources. They peacefully blockaded access only to mine-related traffic because of the serious environmental impacts mining is having on the region, including the drying up of water wells and constant tremors from heavy truck traffic and explosives used in mining operations.

On June 21 riot police officers arrived in the area. Around 1:00pm on June 22, after the protestors asked the driver of a truck transporting materials for the mine to turn back, riot police officers, indiscriminately and without warning, shot tear gas at the protestors and chased them away. They also shot tear gas into houses and a medical clinic where some children were intoxicated by the gas and had to be evacuated. Four protesters who were detained during the operation were released later that day without charges.

For more than five years, communities surrounding Tahoe Resources' Escobal mine have shown through 18 community and municipal referenda, multiple legal actions, sits-ins, encampments, and protests, that Tahoe Resources has no social license for its project. We have written several letters to officials in Guatemala to protest the human rights abuses committed by employees and contractors of Tahoe, as well as Guatemalan security forces, against residents opposing the mine. The abuses have included shootings and killings:

October 2015: Alex Reynosos, Marlon Loy Domínguez, and Estuardo Bran Clavel were shot

April 2015: Telésforo Odilio Pivaral González was assassinated

April 2014: Edward Alexander Reynoso was shot, his 16-year-old daughter Marilyn Topacio Reynoso Pacheco killed

Four police patrols were still present in the community after the incident on June 22. Because of our deep concern about further excessive use of force from continued police presence, we **strongly urge** that you

- promptly investigate the excessive use of force by police officers described above;
- respect, protect and guarantee the freedom of assembly and the right to a peaceful presence in Casillas;
- call on the police to act in accordance with the UN Basic Principles of the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator

copies: Gladys Maritza 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 , via email
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

UA 153/17_Guatemala

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