

via email: SMVasquez@mingob.gob.gt , FRivas@mingob.gob.gt
Sr. Francisco Manuel Rivas Lara
 Minister of Interior of Guatemala

via email: TAldana@mp.gob.gt
Lic. Thelma Esperanza Aldana Hernández
 Attorney General of Guatemala

December 24, 2017

Dear Minister of the Interior Rivas and Attorney General Aldana:

Although we are glad that **Juan Eduardo Caal Suram**, a member of the Artisanal Fishermen's Guild (Gremial de Pescadores Artesanales, or GPA) in El Estor, Izabal Department, was released from detention on December 1, we are very disturbed that he is now under house arrest and still facing criminal prosecution.

Juan Eduardo Caal Suram had been in detention since October 11 when he and several members of other organizations were arrested for their July 21 action of trying to protect Maya-Q'eqchi' communities in El Estor from pollution and environmental damage caused by the mining activities of the Guatemalan Nickel Company (Compañía Guatemalteca de Níquel, or CGN) (cf our letter of Oct 23 2017). Although he was allowed to return home on December 1, Juan Eduardo Caal Suram is under house arrest. He is prohibited from leaving the country, must attend scheduled court dates, and must pay bail of 10000 quetzales.

Juan Eduardo Caal Suram and at least other 7 members of the GPA are facing criminal prosecution because of their efforts to preserve the environment in El Estor. Journalists reporting on their activities are also being criminalized. On November 11, **Jerson Antonio Xitumul Morales**, an indigenous human rights defender and journalist from El Estor, was detained and then charged by a court in El Estor with incitement to commit crimes, threats, and illegal detention related to his alleged participation in protests against CGN on May 4. Jorge Santos, the head of Protection Unit of Human Rights Defenders of Guatemala (UDEFEQUA), has stated that Xitumul clearly identified himself as a reporter and was not participating in the demonstrations (cf our letter Nov 24 2017).

Prosecutors have placed criminal charges on the environmental defenders following false complaints and accusations made by executives of Guatemalan Nickel Company (CGN), formerly owned by the Canadian company HudBay Minerals, and now by Cyprus-based Solway Investments (cf our letters of February 24, June 25 and June 26). CGN has a long, violent history in the region, including the gang rape of 11 women (2007), the murder of Adolfo Ich Chaman (2009), and the killing of Carlos Maaz Coc (2017).

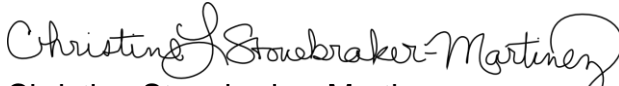
Because of our concern about the ongoing criminalization of GPA members and the journalists reporting on contamination by the nickel company and the organized resistance of environmental defenders, we urge that you

- drop criminal charges against the GPA members and journalists reporting on their activities
- unconditionally release Juan Eduardo Caal Suram from house arrest and remove the requirements of bail and further court proceedings
- allow environmental and human rights defenders to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator



Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Gladys Maritza Ruiz de Veilman, Ambassador of Guatemala to the US ~ via fax 202 745 1908
 Todd D. Robinson, US Ambassador to Guatemala, in care of human rights officer Rain Bian ~ via email
 Guatemala Desk, US State Dept: Sarah Rupert ~ via email
 James Cavallaro, Rapporteur for Guatemala, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
 Francisco José Eguiguren Praeli, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
 Edison Lanza, Special Rapporteur on the Freedom of Expression, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

Frontline 12/6/2017_Guatemala

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