

<p>Alberto Pimentel Mata Minister of Energy and Mines of Guatemala infopublica@mem.gob.gt</p>	<p>Lic. María Consuelo Porras Argueta Attorney General of Guatemala fiscalgeneralmp@gmail.com, carrecis@mp.gob.gt</p>
--	--

February 11, 2021

Dear Minister Pimentel and Attorney General Porras:

We are extremely disturbed at the assassination attempt against indigenous environmental defender **Julio David González Arango**. On the morning of January 16, Julio González was rushed to the hospital after unknown men shot him at his home in Mataquesuintla, Jalapa Department. He is a member of the Peaceful Resistance of Santa Rosa, Jalapa, and Jutiapa Departments. At least three other members of the Peaceful Resistance (**Juan Eduardo Donis, Pablo Adolfo Valenzuela Lima, Edwin Alexander Reynoso Bran**) have received death threats.

Since development of the Escobal silver mine in San Rafael las Flores (Santa Rosa Dept.) began in 2011 (then owned by Canada- and US-based Tahoe Resources and operated in partnership with Guatemala-based Minera San Rafael, S.A.), the Xinka people have peacefully opposed it because of environmental damages that threaten their way of life. Their opposition has been shown through at least 18 community and municipal referenda, multiple legal actions, sits-ins, encampments, and protests. As a result, opposition leaders have suffered multiple human rights abuses committed by mining employees and contractors, as well as Guatemalan security forces.

In July 2017, the Supreme Court of Guatemala suspended mining operations because Tahoe Resources failed to consult with the local Xinka community (represented by the Xinka Parliament in Guatemala). The Constitutional Court ratified this decision in September 2018 and ordered the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM) to undertake a consultation. In February 2019, Pan American Silver of Vancouver, Canada, purchased the Escobal mine. They are endeavoring to fast-track re-opening the mine without the court-ordered consultation or consent of the Xinka people.


This assassination attempt on Julio D. González Arango and grave threats to other environmental defenders are the latest aggressions against members of the Peaceful Resistance and against the indigenous Xinka Parliament. In early December 2020, Julio David González Arango filed a complaint with the Human Rights Defenders Unit of the Public Prosecutor's office. Following this complaint, direct threats increased against Peaceful Resistance members Juan E. Donis, Pablo A. Valenzuela Lima, and Edwin Alexander Reynoso Bran, and also against **Quelvin Otoniel Jiménez Villalta**, who is the lawyer for the indigenous Xinka Parliament. The day following the shooting of Julio D. González Arango (Jan 17), death threat text messages were sent to Juan E. Donis and Pablo A. Valenzuela: "you will be next."

Since 2009 we have sent at least ten letters to authorities in Guatemala about the human rights violations caused by the Escobal silver mine project, which have included two assassination attempts against Peaceful Resistance member Edwin Alexander Reynoso Bran, the killing of his 16-year-old daughter Marilyn Topacio Reynoso Pacheco (April 2014), and death threats to Quelvin Jiménez Villalta.

We **strongly urge** that you

- conduct a complete, independent, and impartial investigation into the latest attack against Julio David González Arango, threats to Juan Eduardo Donis, Pablo Adolfo Valenzuela Lima, Edwin Alexander Reynoso Bran and Quelvin Otoniel Jiménez Villalta, and any previous acts of aggression against the Xinka people, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- ensure that Pan American Silver upholds the order of the Constitutional Court by halting all its public relations work that is increasing tension in the region and is contributing to the insecurity of the residents.

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-coordinators


Christine Stonebraker Martínez

copies: Alfonso José Quiñónez Lemus, Ambassador of Guatemala to the US ~ email, US mail
Lic. Augusto Jordán Rodas Andrade, Prosecutor for Human Rights, Guatemala ~ via email
Inter-American Commission on Human Rights : Esmeralda Arosemena de Troitiño (Rapporteur for Guatemala); Antonia Urrejola (Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights) ~ via email
US State Department: Guatemala Desk in Washington, DC; William Popp, US Ambassador to Guatemala, in care of human rights officer Sarahann Yeh ~ via email
Pan American Silver: Andres Dasso, Senior Vice President, Mining Operations; Sean McAleer, Senior Vice President and Managing Director, Guatemala ~ via US mail
Amnesty International ~ via website
Ellen Moore, International Mining Campaign Manager, Earthworks ~ via email
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

25 JAN 2021_UA007_Guatemala

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