

via email: hpineda@mp.gob.gt Licda. Hilda Pineda Prosecutor of the Human Rights Section of the Public Ministry	via email: fiscalgeneralmp@gmail.com carrecis@mp.gob.gt Lica. María Consuelo Porras Argueta Attorney General of Guatemala
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April 29, 2021

Dear Prosecutor Pineda and Attorney General Porras:

We are incredulous and angry that **Anastasia Mejía**, an Indigenous Maya K'iche' (Quiché) journalist from Joyabaj municipality in Quiché Department, is still awaiting trial after five months and, because of court orders, is severely limited in her journalistic work.

Besides her work as a journalist, Anastasia Mejía owns Xol Abaj Radio and Xol Abaj TV, which transmit in Spanish and K'iche' and are listened to in the U.S. She is also an Indigenous community leader and a Mayan spiritual guide. On September 22, 2020 the Guatemalan National Civil Police (PNC) arrested Anastasia Mejía, accused her of participating in an Indigenous protest on August 24 (on which she was reporting) and charged her with sedition, aggravated attack, arson, and aggravated robbery (cf our letter of Sept 26, 2020). She was arbitrarily detained for 37 days, without a preventive detention order, at the Quetzaltenango Penitentiary Center. The court-ordered conditions of her release require her to remain in Quiché, to report to the prosecutor's office every 15 days, and to refrain from approaching the mayor, a long-time subject of her reporting, or any member of city council (cf our letter of Nov 1, 2020). She is unable to do reporting in some parts of Joyabaj because the mayor has unofficially banned her from most public activities by pressuring people not to admit her under penalty of losing municipal funding or permission to gather.


Although the original criminal charges have been reduced, Anastasia Mejía still faces prison terms of four to twelve years for arson and up to two years for sedition. Her trial has been delayed multiple times. Susy Pérez, the first judge assigned to the case, withdrew from the trial in February after defense lawyers accused her of discrimination against Indigenous people. To date, a new judge has not been assigned to the case.

We believe that the judicial delays and continued obstacles to Anastasia Mejía's reporting are attempts to silence the voices of Indigenous peoples, to conceal information on corruption and human rights abuses, and to generate fear among communities.

We **strongly urge** that you

- drop all criminal charges against Anastasia Mejía
- take all measures necessary to ensure that all journalists in Guatemala can do their reporting work without legal harassment, online attacks and threats of violence.

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
 IAHR: Esmeralda Arosemena de Troitiño, Rapporteur for Guatemala, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
 IAHR: Antonia Urrejola Noguera, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
 IAHR: Edison Lanza, Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
 OACNUDH: Oficina del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos en Guatemala ~ 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
 Natalie Southwick, CPJ Central and South America Program Coordinator ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

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