

<p>Agapito Alexander Rodríguez Executive Director of INHGEOMIN Honduran Institute of Geology and Mining</p>	<p>Liliam Lizeth Rivera Minister of MiAmbiente Honduras Energy, Natural Resources, Environment, and Mining</p>
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July 21, 2022

Dear Executive Director Rodríguez and Minister Rivera:

We are writing to you today in deep sadness and anger about the **continuous threats against local community members and defenders of the 200-year-old Indigenous Maya-Chortí cemetery** in the Azacualpa community in La Unión, Copán Department, including a recent incident involving death threats against human rights defender **Fredy García**.

Fredy García is fearing for his life after having received death threats from Jacobo Paz, who is known as the manager of the San Andrés gold mining project, which is owned by US- and Canada-based Aura Minerals and operated by its Honduran subsidiary MINOSA (Minerales de Occidente SA). Fredy García had filed a complaint with the Public Ministry against Jacobo Paz and Dimar Miranda Pérez, a contractor for the mining company, because of the contamination of a vital water source for the community of La Ceibita, a sister community of Azacualpa. In retaliation, people have been coming to the home of Fredy García and threatening him.

For several years, the Azacualpa community has been organizing to shut down the San Andrés gold mine. Like other large scale open-pit mechanized mines, its operations leach deadly chemicals such as cyanide into water sources. Additionally, to reach the gold reserves that are found under the cemetery hill, MINOSA, in conjunction with the government, has been exhuming graves and destroying the Indigenous cemetery with plans to use dynamite to better access the minerals.

The exhumations have been declared illegal, and the mining company was ordered to stop any further operations on the cemetery hill on more than on occasion by the Supreme Court of Justice and the Court of Appeals of Santa Rosa de Copán. MINOSA, however, has continued with the destruction. We are deeply troubled by the indifference with which the mining company reacts to the issued court orders and saddened by the numerous reports of violence and safety threats to the local community.

To protect the local community of Azacualpa and its surrounding sister communities from further acts of violence, intimidation, and destruction and to permanently terminate the mining operations at the Azacualpa cemetery, **we strongly urge you to:**

- order an immediate suspension of the detonations and destruction and of the cemetery in La Unión, Copán
- order an immediate retreat of the mining company and all its affiliates, including armed forces, from the local communities, as well as ensuring the safety of all community members and defenders
- revoke any outstanding mining approvals of MINOSA and order a suspension of any actions to expand the geography of the San Andrés mine until local communities are sufficiently consulted and give their approval through an inclusive process

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator


Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Aura Minerals: Rodrigo Barbosa (President & CEO), Sofia Aguilar (Gen. Mgr for Community, Institutional and Legal Relations) ~ via US mail and email
MINOSA ~ via US mail
Luis Suazo Barahona, Ambassador of Honduras to the US ~ via email and US mail
Carlos Bernal Pulido, Rapporteur for Honduras, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email and US mail
Isabel Albaladejo Escribano, Representative to Honduras of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OACNUDH) ~ via email
Alice Shackelford, UN Resident Coordinator in Honduras, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ~ via email
Bufete de Estudios para la Dignidad / Office of Studies for Dignity ~ via email
US Embassy in Honduras: Ambassador Laura F. Dogu; Nate Rettenmayer, Political Officer; Ariel Jahner, Human Rights Officer ~ via email
US State Department: Molly Runyon, Honduras Desk Officer ~ via email
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
US Representatives Beatty, Brown, Gibbs, González, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

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