

# IRTF

InterReligious Task Force on Central America

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Licda. María Consuelo Porras Argueta  
Fiscal General de la República  
Ministerio Público : 15 Avenida 15-16 zona 1  
Edificio Gerona 8º Nivel  
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala 01001

September 26, 2022

Dear Attorney General Porras:

We are saddened and angered to hear about another **act of aggression and oppression against the Ixil Indigenous community of Nebaj**, Department of El Quiché. With only two days' notice, on September 1 the Ixil Authorities of Nebaj were forced to vacate the office in the municipal building that they had occupied since 2013. During the eviction process, several of the Ixil Authorities were hurt and had to receive medical attention.

On August 30, Ixil Authorities arrived at their office and saw an order to vacate the building taped on the door. Ixil Authorities were told that they had to move out because of renovations on the municipal building, but no remodeling plans have been disclosed. Municipality workers began boarding up the office on August 31. The following day, the door of the office was broken, and workers from the municipality began to forcefully evict the Ixil Authorities from their premises. The Ixil Indigenous Authorities have not been provided with a temporary office while the alleged renovations will be carried out.

In addition to serving as an essential space of protection and organizing for the Ixil people of Nebaj, the office also currently holds legal documents and evidence related to an investigation of the municipal mayor of Nebaj, Virgilio Geronimo Bernal Guzman. Ever since their investigations started, Ixil authorities have suffered from multiple incidents of harassment and intimidation; it is reasonable to suspect that the forced eviction of their offices is also related to these investigations.

This act of aggression by the municipality against the Ixil Indigenous Authorities of Nebaj is only one of many violations of the rights and integrity of Indigenous peoples in Guatemala, with regularly occurring threats and attacks against Indigenous leaders, especially those who oppose corruption. The violence and oppression that many Indigenous communities and authorities experience in Guatemala while fighting for their rights is highly unacceptable and concerning.

We condemn this violation of the Ixil Indigenous people's rights and the forceful eviction from their authorities' office and recognize the importance that the premises have for the community and their political integrity. We therefore strongly urge you to:

- demand that the municipality immediately restore access to the Ixil Authorities' office
- ensure the physical integrity of each of the community's members
- implement proper protection of the Ixil Indigenous Authorities and their legal documents and other property as they continue with their investigations

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Co-coordinators



Christine Stonebraker Martínez

copies: Alfonso José Quiñónez Lemus, Ambassador of Guatemala to the US ~ via email, US mail  
Office of the Ombudsman for Human Rights of Guatemala (PDH) ~ via email  
IACHR: Esmeralda Arosemena de Troitiño, Rapporteur for Guatemala and for Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email and US mail  
OACNUDH: Mika Kanervavuori, Oficina del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos en Guatemala (OACNUDH) ~ via email  
US State Department: Guatemala Desk Officers in Washington, DC: Doug Choi, Moises Mendoza ~ via email  
US State Department: William Popp, US Ambassador to Guatemala, in care of human rights officer Sarahann Yeh ~ via email  
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, Brown, Gibbs, Gonzalez, 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:**