

# IRTF

InterReligious Task Force on Central America

3606 Bridge Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44113

tel: 216.961.0003 fax: 216.961.0002 e-mail: [irtf@irtfcleveland.org](mailto:irtf@irtfcleveland.org)

**Lic. José Alejandro Córdoba**

Procurador de los Derechos Humanos

12 avenida 12-54, zona 1. Ciudad de Guatemala

November 25, 2022

Dear Procurador Córdoba:

We call on authorities to protect **Luis Adolfo Ich Choc**, an elected representative of the Ancestral Council of the Q'eqchi' People of El Estor, Izabal Department. Luis is the son of defender Angelica Choc and the late Adolfo Ich. In January 2021, Colonel Mynor Rolando Padilla, the ex-chief of security for Guatemala Nickel Company (CGN), was convicted of the 2009 murder of Adolfo Ich. In recent months, Luis Adolfo Ich Choc has been the victim of robbery and a physical attack.

On September 16, Luis Adolfo Ich Choc was summoned to a meeting in Rio Dulce to discuss the supposed election of two authorities who would represent the Q'eqchi' peoples before the COCODE (Departmental Development Council) about issues surrounding the nickel mine. Because the representatives nominated for these positions were put forth by the mining company (Switzerland-based Solway Investment Group), Luis took the floor and protested. He made a successful argument that the election be conducted in a transparent assembly. This provoked the anger of the people who were trying to advance the interests favoring Solway Investment Group/CGN.

When he was on his way home to El Estor after the meeting at about 7:30pm, two individuals on a motorcycle wearing masks shot twice in his direction and yelled: "We are looking for you. You are the one who is screwing around. Today it's time for you to stop screwing around." They robbed Luis of his cell phone, personal documents, and cash. As they sped off on their motorcycle, the criminals shot again in Luis' direction. Fortunately, he was physically unharmed.

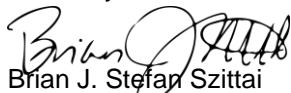
Luis suffered a second attack a month later. On October 19 at about 9:30pm, after leaving a soccer game with friends in El Estor, three men said: "We are waiting for you." They proceeded to beat and kick Luis until they fractured the shoulder of his right arm.

The nickel mining operation has been a source of contention and violence for many years in El Estor, a community where 90% of the inhabitants are indigenous Maya Q'eqchi'. The Swiss-Russian consortium Solway Investment Group purchased the mine from HudBay Minerals in 2011; the mine is operated by its subsidiary, the Guatemalan Nickel Company (CGN). For the past 15 years, impacted residents have reiterated that the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM) did not obtain their free, prior, and informed consent as required by national and international law (ILO Convention 169, the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention of 1989). In its ruling in 2019, the Constitutional Court of Guatemala ratified the right to consultation and resolved that the mining company had to suspend its mining activity. The company later carried out a "consultation" but excluded many key actors, including the fishing communities and the local indigenous authorities. The mining operations continue in defiance of the spirit of the court ruling.

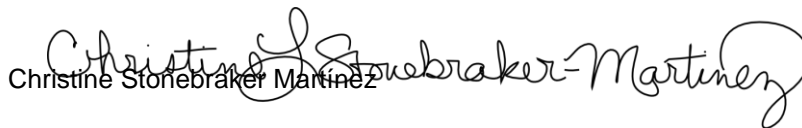
We urge that the government of Guatemala:

- Investigate the attacks on Luis Adolfo Ich Choc and bring those responsible to justice
- Offer protective measures to Luis Adolfo Ich Choc, in strict accordance with his wishes
- order a suspension of mining activities until this situation is resolved with the local community

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Co-coordinators



Christine Stonebraker Martinez

copies: Alfonso José Quiñónez Lemus, Ambassador of Guatemala to the US ~ email, US mail  
IACHR: Esmeralda Arosemena de Troitiño, Rapporteur for Guatemala, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email and US mail  
Solway Investment Group ~ via email  
Embassy of Switzerland in the US ~ via email  
OACNUDH: Mika Kanervavuori, Oficina del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos en Guatemala (OACNUDH) ~ via email  
US State Department: William Popp, US Ambassador to Guatemala; Guatemala Desk Officers in Washington, DC: Doug Choi, Moises Mendoza ~ via email  
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, Brown, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

19 OCT 2022\_RightsAction\_Guatemala

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