

**Lic. José Alejandro Córdoba**

Procurador de los Derechos Humanos

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

December 23, 2022

Dear Procurador Córdoba:

We are outraged to learn of the **forced displacement of the Maya Q'eqchi' community of Se'inup'** in El Chal, Petén Department, carried out by agents of the National Civilian Police (PNC).

The forced displacement resulted from a longstanding land dispute with the agricultural company San Agustín S.A. The farm where the Se'inup' community is located is a parcel of land registered in the name of the Guatemalan State. The 56 families of Se'inup' have been working with the Land Fund (Fondo de Tierras) to legally acquire the land in its favor. Because San Agustín has also registered this parcel, the company has filed complaints with the Public Ministry (MP) for the crime of usurpation against community authorities of Se'inup'. Even though the MP has concluded that this case is an agrarian issue and not a criminal one, the judge of San Benito, Petén, Benjamín Chinchilla, authorized the eviction.

This is not the first time that the families of Se'inup' have been forcibly displaced in recent weeks. An extrajudicial eviction was carried out on September 30. At around nine o'clock at night, unknown perpetrators went from house to house to shoot into the air, generating fear and terror in the families, and then burned their homes, their domestic animals and poultry, along with their personal belongings. Community leaders went to present a complaint to the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (PDH) and the Chal Municipal Prosecutor's Office. The responses from the offices were disappointing. Neither did they order an investigation nor did they issue any protection measures for the families.

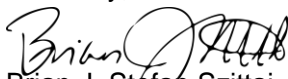
During the past several months, Q'eqchi' communities have been evicted in the region of Alta Verapaz, Izabal and Petén, despite the organized resistance of the Indigenous communities. Local government authorities continue to side with more powerful economic and political interests. In the case of Se'inup', where families engage in subsistence farming, they have been working through the legal process of land titling. Whether the state would give them all their land or half, they were ready to accept the ruling. In the meantime, they have nowhere else to go.

The Comité Campesino del Altiplano (CCDA) reports that in 2022 alone, more than 70 apparently legal evictions have been carried out, and another 15 extrajudicial ones. During the forced eviction of the Se'inup' community on December 15, some homes were burned. It is unclear whether the burning was done by the National Civilian Police or employees of San Agustín S.A.

We strongly urge that authorities:

- legally resolve the land conflict and grant at least half of the land to the families of Se'inup'
- stop issuing eviction orders while legal processes are still pending
- stop siding with the interests of private companies over the needs of subsistence farmers

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Co-coordinators



Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Licda. María Consuelo Porras Argueta, Attorney General of Guatemala ~ via email  
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  
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

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