

IRTF

InterReligious Task Force on Central America
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Junta Directiva del Congreso de la República
Diputado Nery Abilio Ramos y Ramos, Presidente
Avenida 9, 9-44 Zona 1
Cuidad de Guatemala
GUATEMALA

May 4, 2025

Dear Members of the Junta Directiva del Congreso:

We are deeply distressed by the pretrial incarceration of Indigenous K'iche' leaders **Luis Pacheco** and **Héctor Chaclán**, the former president and treasurer of the 48 Cantones de Totonicapán, an association that represents the 48 K'iche' communities of Totonicapán municipality, Totonicapán Department. On April 23, police arrested them at their respective homes. On April 25, a judge dismissed the charges of criminal association, sedition, and obstruction of justice alleged by the Attorney General's office but upheld the allegations of terrorism and remanded the two men to pretrial detention in the military prison Mariscal Zavala in Guatemala City.


The charges against Luis Pacheco (who recently served as the deputy minister for sustainable development in the Ministry of Energy) and Héctor Chaclán originate from nationwide protests in 2023-2024 that sought to ensure the peaceful transition to power of then-President-elect Bernardo Arévalo while also demanding the resignation of Attorney General María Consuelo Porras. In his role as president of the 48 Cantones of Totonicapán, Luis Pacheco was one of the leaders of peaceful protests that shut down highways across Guatemala for three weeks in October 2023.

The persecution of Luis Pacheco and Héctor Chaclán (which has prompted widespread condemnation from Indigenous organizations, political officials such as President Arévalo, and international bodies like the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights) is indicative of the ongoing pattern of criminalization of human rights defenders, Indigenous leaders, and journalists who have fought against corruption and impunity. Attorney General María Consuelo Porras has been accused of criminalizing the constitutional rights to freedom of expression and assembly. She has been sanctioned for corruption by the US and over 40 other countries, all while using her position to persecute those who have fought against corruption, such as in the cases of former public prosecutor Virginia Laparra (cf our letter 04 AUG 2024) and award-winning anti-corruption journalist José Rubén Zamora (cf our letter 03 MAY 2025).

We strongly urge that authorities:

- drop all charges against Luis Pacheco and Héctor Chaclán and release them to their families
- investigate Attorney General María Consuelo Porras for violating the rights of Indigenous peoples and impeding corruption investigations
- end the misuse of the judicial process against human rights defenders, Indigenous leaders, and others who have fought against corruption
- increase the transparency of legal processes by ending the attorney general's use of confidentiality orders in cases concerning indigenous activists and human rights defenders

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-coordinators



Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: President Bernardo Arévalo, President of the Republic ~ via email
José Alejandro Córdova Herrera, Ombudsman for Human Rights (PDH) ~ via email
Hugo Eduardo Beteta, Ambassador of Guatemala to the United States ~ via email
IACHR: Andrea Pochak (Rapporteur for Guatemala) and Arif Bulkan (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 (UN) ~ via email
US State Department: Tobin John Bradley (US Ambassador to Guatemala) and Guatemala Desk Officers in Washington, DC ~ via email
US Senators Husted and Moreno ~ via email
US Representatives Beatty, Brown, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Miller, Rulli, Sykes ~ via email

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