

Mtra. Ana Patricia Orantes Thomas

MARN: Ministerio de Ambiente y Recursos Naturales / Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources

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Cd de Guatemala, Guatemala

Marnenlinea@marn.gob.gt

August 19, 2025

Dear Minister Orantes:

We are writing to express our concern over the events taking place along the Icbolay River, in Cobán, Alta Verapaz Department, where Raaxhá SA Hydroelectric Company has failed to respect the will of local communities and continues to commit environmental and human rights violations in pursuit of its infrastructure projects. Community authorities in the region have been denouncing the continuous expansion of Raaxhá's hydroelectric project and the hoarding of more collective areas for their installation of solar energy plants, without the consent of those affected.

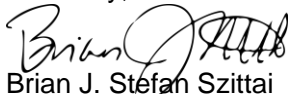
Since Raaxhá began their operations on the Icbolay River, there has been evident depletion of the river's water supply with the operation of its hydroelectric dam, contaminating what remains of the water and negatively affecting individuals' health and the environment. Additionally, Raaxhá has consistently failed to fulfill social agreements that were the cornerstone of local communities' consent in the project's development. Despite promising to improve accessibility to drinking water, build new health centers, and improve local infrastructure and job opportunities, no such developments have occurred. Instead, the company has expanded its operations, blocked residents' access without community consensus, and abandoned the drinking water service.

The affected communities of San José Icbolay and Las Promesas are denouncing the fact that a prior, free and informed consultation, as required by International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 169, was never carried out. Furthermore, the injustice committed by Raaxhá in expanding its projects without formal consultations appears to be permissible to Guatemalan authorities. In 2017, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) chose to approve Raaxhá's progress in constructing their hydroelectric plant, despite the fact that it involved diverting most of the flow of the Icbolay River near the Laguna de Lachuá National Park. MARN's complicity in the draining and denial of accessible water for local inhabitants is reflective of a larger pattern of prioritizing the economic development of corporations over the will and well-being of Guatemalans.

We stand in solidarity with the San José Icbolay and Las Promesas communities and urge that your government:

- (1) ensure a free, formal and transparent consultation process with the affected Maya Q'eqchi' communities of Cobán regarding any expansion of Raaxhá SA Hydroelectric Company's operations
- (2) form a commission to investigate harms against the people and the environment in Alta Verapaz as a result of the hydroelectric power plant

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-coordinators



Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Carlos José A. González Asturias, President, Hidroeléctrica Raaxhá S.A. ~ via email to ERC Captial Group

Hugo Eduardo Beteta, Ambassador of Guatemala to the US ~ via email

Lic. José Alejandro Córdova Herrera, Ombudsman for Human Rights (PDH) ~ via email

IACHR: Andrea Pochak (Rapporteur for Guatemala) and Arif Bulkan (Rights of Indigenous Peoples), Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email

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 from Ohio (Husted and Moreno) ~ via email

US Representatives from Ohio (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: