

I R T F

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

Ambassador Hugo Eduardo Beteta
Embassy of Guatemala
2220 R St. NW.
Washington, DC 20008

July 21, 2026

Dear Ambassador Beteta:

We are writing to express our concern regarding the **resumption of nickel mining operations by Fénix Nickel** in El Estor, Izabal, Guatemala, and the expansion of mining licenses in Indigenous Maya Q'eqchi' territory in Livingston, Izabal Department.

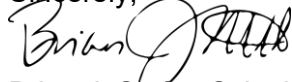
Rio Nickel, S.A., a subsidiary of the Canadian company Central America Nickel (CAN) that bought the mine from Solway in 2024, holds more than a dozen mining exploration and exploitation applications in the Sierra Santa Cruz mountain range in Livingston, Izabal. These applications have generated significant community opposition due to the lack of adequate consultation with Q'eqchi' communities in the region. In April 2025, more than 50 Maya Q'eqchi' communities mobilized opposition to mining in the region when CAN submitted a mining license application for the Santa Anita II mine in Livingston (cf our letter 14 April 2025).

Fénix Nickel resumed operations in El Estor in late May 2026. In response, Maya Q'eqchi' authorities from Panzós and El Estor have requested precautionary measures from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), citing serious environmental risks, corruption, criminalization of community members, and the government's failure to carry out a free, prior, and informed consultation. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruled in December 2023 that Guatemala violated Indigenous communities' rights by authorizing mining without adequate consultation and ordered that a consultation take place, a ruling the resumption of mining operations ignores. The mine had been suspended since 2023 following US Treasury sanctions for bribery schemes, suggesting that Guatemalan politicians and government officials were connected to the former Swiss/Russian Solway Investment Group ownership of the project.

We urge authorities to:

- (1) suspend operations of the El Fénix nickel mine in El Estor until a free, prior, and informed consultation is conducted in compliance with the 2023 Inter-American Court ruling
- (2) stop review and approval of Rio Nickel, S.A.'s pending licenses in Livingston until necessary Maya Q'eqchi' community consultation has taken place, (as required by national and international law, the ILO Convention 169)
- (3) ensure accountability for any officials connected to corruption and bribery with the mining operations

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-coordinator

copies: Ing. Víctor Hugo Ventura Ruiz, Ministro de Energía y Minas (MEM) ~ via email
Juan Fernando Castro Martínez, Viceministro de Energía y Minas (MEM), Encargado del Área Energética ~ via email
MAR: Ministerio de Ambiente y Recursos Naturales / Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources
Lic. José Alejandro Córdova, Ombudsman for Human Rights (PDH) ~ via email
IACHR: Andrea Pochak (Rapporteur for Guatemala) and Riyad Insanally (Rights of Indigenous Peoples), Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
OACNUDH: Viviana de la Peña, Oficina del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos en Guatemala (UN High Commissioner for Human Rights) ~ via email
Central America Nickel (CAN) ~ via email
US Embassy in Guatemala: Jorgan K Andrews, Chargé d'Affaires ~ via email
US State Department: 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: