

Urgent Action: Arbitrary Detention in Guatemala of María Magdalena Cuc Choc, sister of Angelica Choc and Ramiro Choc

<http://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/arbitrary-detention-of-mara-magdalena-cuc-choc>

(January 17, 2018, El Estor, Izabal) María is a widely respected community leader of the Maya Q'eqchi' peoples in eastern Guatemala; is the sister of Angelica and Ramiro Choc; and the sister-in-law of the late Adolfo Ich, murdered in 2009 by the private security agents of Hudbay Minerals and CGN.



(Maria – with sombrero – along with Diodora Hernandez and family. In 2010, Diodora, a Mayan-Mam community defender, was shot in the right eye by employees of Goldcorp Inc's then operating gold mine, as a way to force Diodora's family to sell their land to Goldcorp. Miraculously, Diodora survived (losing sight in her eye and hearing in her right ear) and refused to sell her land.)

Who is Maria?

Besides being well known throughout Guatemala for her courage and vision, Maria is well known in Canada. Since 2004, she has played, alongside sister Angelica, a vital role in documenting and denouncing environmental harms, human rights violations and repression caused by a series of legally-connected Canadian mining companies (Skye Resources, HMI Nickel Inc., Hudbay Minerals). In 2009, Adolfo Ich – Angelica's husband, Maria's brother-in-law – was assassinated as part of the community, environmental, human rights defense struggle of the Maya Q'eqchi' people.

María has worked particularly closely with the remote, mountain community of Lote 8 that was burned and destroyed in 2007 as part of an illegal eviction on behalf of the Canadian companies. During the destruction and eviction, 11 women were gang-raped by company security guards,

soldiers and police. After working closely with the Lote 8 rape victims, for years, Maria accompanied some of them to Canada in 2012 as they participated in the precedent setting lawsuits against Hudbay Minerals, for the gang-rapes, the killing of Adolfo Ich and the shooting paralyzing of German Chub.



(Maria Cuc, supporting and working with the Q'eqchi' women from Lote 8 who had been raped by police, soldiers and private security guards of Hudbay Minerals during an illegal and violent eviction.)

Furthermore, Maria's brother – Ramiro – is a widely respected community defender who was illegally jailed as a political prisoner from 2008-2014 on trumped up charges.

January 17, 2018

Without an arrest warrant against her, María was captured on January 17, 2018, at 1:00pm in the city of Puerto Barrios where she had been accompanying the Q'eqchi' community of Rubel Pek in a legal hearing they are involved with, acting as an interpreter/translator from Spanish into their native Q'eqchi'. Following the hearing, she had gone to a bank when she was detained by police. Without being duly notified about the reason for her arrest, she was immediately taken to the local police station.

Family members and numerous communities are very concerned about María's arrest. It is suspected Maria is being detained on trumped up charges related to a community and environmental defense struggle she is involved with in the Livingston municipality – the community of Chaabil Choch -, along with her brother Ramiro. It is suspected that police might try and detain him as well.

What to do?

Send expressions of solidarity to Maria and her family, and to Angelica, Ramiro and their entire family. Right now, her family, especially her children, are suffering psychological trauma. (See contact information below)

In Guatemala, consider traveling to El Estor to accompany the families of Maria and Angelica, and to report on this situation. (Contact the Choc family in Spanish, or Rights Action, if you are interested in accompanying and reporting on this crisis situation, before making any travel plans.)

Donate funds in the U.S. and Canada, to Rights Action, to help get the legal and solidarity support necessary to have Maria freed as soon as possible and to pressure the corrupted Guatemalan legal system to drop these trumped up charges. Rights Action has already wired emergency-humanitarian response funds to the Choc family, and will send more in the days and weeks to come as this struggle to free Maria plays itself out.

In Canada and the U.S., don't stop writing your politicians and government officials, informing them of on-going repression, impunity and corruption in Guatemala carried out by a government that is a strong ally of the U.S. and Canada, that our governments, companies and investors do extensive business with. The endemic exploitation, poverty and racism, the repression, corruption and impunity of Honduras and Guatemala are 'American' and 'Canadian' issues. The U.S. and Canadian governments, the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank, and North American companies and investors (including pension funds), maintain profitable economic and military relations with the Guatemalan and Honduran regimes, turning a blind eye and/or directly contributing to environmental harms, exploitation, repression, corruption and impunity that force so many to flee their homes and country, decade after decade.

Contact, in El Estor, Guatemala

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Contact, in Canada/U.S.

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