

“I haven't robbed anyone. I haven't murdered anyone. I am an Indigenous woman defending her territories, her lands, her rights.”

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/i-havent-robbed-anyone-i-havent-murdered-anyone-i-am-an-indigenous-woman-defending-her-territories-lands-rights>



Criminalization of Maria Cuc Choc, a Maya Q'eqchi' land and Indigenous rights defender in Guatemala

On September 10, 2020, Maria Cuc Choc – a widely respected land and Indigenous rights defender – must be in court in Guatemala for the 6th time over two years, to face trumped charges against her in the corrupted Guatemalan court system.

A few days ago, Rights Action sent Maria an emergency grant to enable her to support her family and respond to these abusive, racist charges - this 'criminalization' of her life.

Maria -- sister of Angelica Choc (widow of murdered community defender Adolfo Ich); sister of Ramiro Choc (who spent 6 years in jail, a political prisoner on trumped up charges for defending Q'eqchi' lands and human rights) -- sent Rights Action a voice mail by Whassap, responding to the emergency funds sent to her. Maria gave us permission to publish her message.

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Maria Cuc Choc speaks

"I haven't robbed anyone. I haven't murdered anyone. I am an Indigenous woman defending her territories, her lands, her rights."

Very good afternoon, Grahame

I am surprised by your message – but really from the bottom of my heart, I thank you.

I am living the worst moment of my life. I never imagined I would get to this point.

I am living the pandemic. The COVID19. The coronavirus.

I'm living in a state of siege. I'm confronting the military.

And I'm facing this sickness, of them keeping me closed in.

But I also have the criminalization on top of it. I have the house arrest in which I have to report regularly to the courts.

I haven't robbed anyone. I haven't murdered anyone.

I am simply an Indigenous woman defending her territories, her lands, her rights.

And the rights of many brothers and sisters who are dispossessed, violated in their communities by the extractive companies, the monoculture companies, the hydro-electric companies, the oil companies.

My great enemy is those corrupt people in the government.

My great enemy is ex-president Otto Perez Molina, ex-deputy Rodrigo Lainfiesta Limolo and his foreman Joel Diaz.

I will go to court. They have cancelled my hearings for the fifth time.

This is the sixth time, which is on September 10.

But I'll go, and I'll ask my ancestors for a lot of strength, so that everything goes well.

I will endure all the injustices they intend to inflict on me.

My house is not the same anymore.

I feel like dying.

But I still find the strength. A woman who no longer lives happily with her children because she has to take refuge.

The children also have to hide. They have to beg for food from other families.

This is the consequence of criminalization, defending my rights and territory.

I am grateful for all your support, infinitely grateful for all the people who have helped me morally, psychologically, and economically.

Without even thinking of it - yesterday was September 5th, International Day of Indigenous Women.

We women resist. We are more creative. We women defend the territories. We become thousands.

We are healers, we are doctors, birth attendants, midwives, we are nurses, we are psychologists.

We are farmers, we defend the territory.

But there are also organizations that only take advantage of our work.

Thank you Grahame Russell

From El Estor, Izabal, Greetings from Maria Choc

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Maria Cuc Choc

Rights Action has worked with Maria Cuc Choc since 2006. She has been 'criminalized' for her courageous, empowering land and indigenous rights work. For over 10 years, Maria has been a principal supporter of the 13 plaintiffs in the Hudbay Minerals lawsuits.

Hudbay Minerals ARCHIVES

<https://rightsaction.org/hudbay-minerals-archives>

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Including land & rights defenders like Maria Cuc Choc

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