

Who is the woman with the gun, attacking - with the Guatemalan police - a Q'eqchi' villager from El Estor?

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/attack-on-qeqchi-villager-from-el-estor>



This aggression was apparently carried out on behalf of the palm company Naturaceites and the mining company Suisa Solway Investment Group, and its subsidiary CGN.

- **Below: Prensa Comunitaria article**

Soon after Rights Action completed an eight-day human rights delegation, visiting four community defense struggles resisting the mining operations of Canadian, U.S. and Swiss mining companies, the U.S. and Canadian-backed Guatemalan regime continues its repressive crackdown on Mayan Q'eqchi' people and communities involved in land and human rights defense struggles related to the Swiss company Solway Investment Group's illegal nickel mining operation in eastern Guatemala.

For more information about delegation "TESTIMONIO: Canadian Mining in the Aftermath of Genocides in Guatemala", contact Professor Catherine Nolin (UNBC, Catherine.Nolin@unbc.ca), & Grahame Russell (Rights Action, info@rightsaction.org)

Global economy operating as usual

Every largescale mining operation in Guatemala is characterized by violence, forced evictions and environmental destruction, and by systemic corruption and illegality. In this eastern region of the country, every largescale African palm 'for export' operation is characterized by the same.

Private citizens and police detain two community members in El Estor; their legal situation is unknown

Prensa Comunitaria, November 17, 2022

Original: <https://www.prensacomunitaria.org/2022/11/particulares-y-policias-detienen-a-dos-comunitarios-en-el-estor-se-desconoce-su-situacion-legal1/>

As part of an intelligence operation against a peaceful demonstration, people dressed in private clothes identify two community members of Chinebal, and detained them with excessive use of violence and the support of uniformed police. The reasons for their arrest are not known.

This demonstration, organized by the Committee of Campesino Unity (CUC) in El Estor, Izabal, ended on the morning of November 16 with the arrest of David Coc Pop and Roberto Can Choc, whose current situation and the reasons for their arrest are unknown 24 hours later.

Rafael González, from CUC, informed that it is known that both Coc Pop and Can Choc are from the Palestina Chinebal community, in the southern area of El Estor, but they do not know the reasons for their arrest. "We believe that the comrades had a previous arrest warrant but we are still finding out what happened, why the PNC came to capture them at the demonstration," Gonzalez said.

Separately, Humberto Coc, a member of the ancestral authority of Palestina Chinebal, reported that in the demonstration organized on Wednesday, only people from the CUC participated, so he has no information about what happened. However, he is making the necessary arrangements to support the captured community members.

According to the information provided by Rafael Gonzalez of CUC, the demonstration was organized due to the multiple problems faced by the many Q'eqchi' communities of El Estor, since the municipality does not attend to them and ignores their requests and problems.

"The Santa Rosita community, the Sierra Santa Cruz and Chinebal, have problems that are not attended by the municipality. For example, since 2013 the Sierra Santa Cruz community requested support for the installation of a hammock bridge over the Tunico River, but to date and after several recent hurricanes – Eta, Iota, Julia - that request has not been addressed. The Santa Rosita community is not recognized as a community and, for a year, they have been seeking dialogue to resolve their situation, but they are not being attended to so that is why we were demonstrating", said González.

The group of community members maintain that their demonstration was peaceful and that they wanted to speak with municipal authorities to seek a solution to their problems. However, after the arrival of at least four radio patrols, the repression against the community group began.

"Suddenly they arrived to capture"

Through loudspeakers the community members made speeches and requests to Mayor Joel Lorenzo Flores. Everything seemed to be going normally until four radio patrol cars and private vehicles arrived. The agents tried to dislodge the demonstration while the people dressed in civilian clothes positioned themselves in strategic places.

This put the demonstrators on alert and they felt attacked while protesting. Moments after the arrival of these vehicles, chaos ensued, as the people in private clothes fired into the air and taking advantage of the confusion captured two community members.

"They fired into the air with their weapons without regard for the risk to other people. The actions of the police and the private individuals were violent. They attacked our comrades who were captured," said a community member whose name was withheld for security reasons.

A video circulated on social networks shows a woman dressed as a private citizen capturing and assaulting a community member who is then thrown into a radio patrol car to be taken to court.

Stealing land for African palm exports

Both Rafael González of CUC and the community members of Chinebal believe that the two people captured had previous arrest warrants, since the community of Chinebal has been under attack by the company Naturaceites, which has criminalized and violently evicted the community that does not allow them to continue with the planting of African palm in their community.

"The Naturaceites company wants to appropriate Chinebal's land. That is why they criminalize the community members and the PNC acts in favor of them. We hope that the Public Prosecutor's Office investigates and determines which people were the ones who came to capture our comrades who were treated like animals. This is no way to treat community members," said González.

Prensa Comunitaria made telephone calls to the El Estor police substation. There the agents said that officer Rolando Salán had information about those captured and the crimes for which they are accused. Prensa Comunitaria then called the officer - he referred us back to the substation. When it was clarified to him that it had already been done, he said Prensa Comunitaria would have to contact the police station of Puerto Barrios. When calling there it was indicated that only the courts could give that information. Finally, in the courts it was argued that a lawyer in person should request that information.

In conclusion, no one knows what happened and the legal situation of the two community members who were violently captured by private individuals.

Unresolved problems in the communities of El Estor

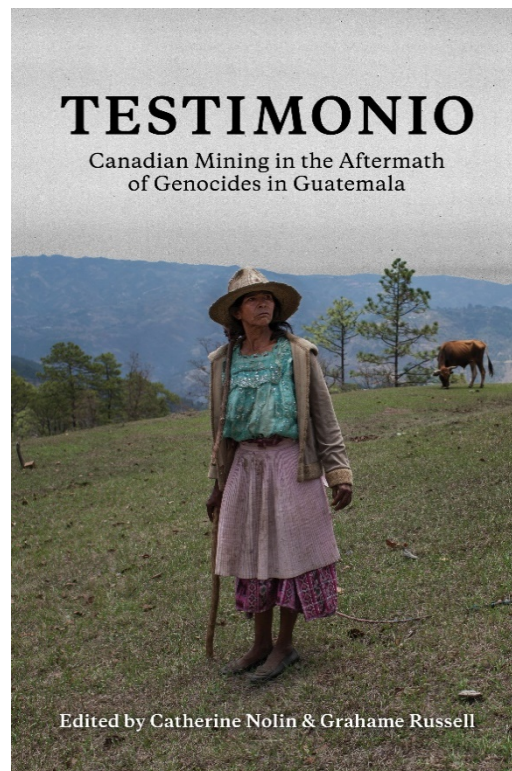
Juan Choc, member of the Community Development Council (COCODE) of the Santa Rosita community, declared that since 2021 the auxiliary mayor of the community left the community's official book of minutes in the municipality of El Estor so that the new members of the COCODE could be registered and authorized. But to date, the municipal secretary Allan Buenafe has not returned the book of minutes because he claims that the land where the community is located is private property.

More Information

- 60 Years of Mining in Q'eqchi' Territories (Rights Action archives): <https://rightsaction.org/hudbay-minerals-archives>
- Prensa Comunitaria, <https://www.prensacomunitaria.org/>

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