

URGENT ACTION

ATTACKS AGAINST XINCA LEADERS CONTINUE

On 7 February 2021, Luis Fernando García Monroy, member of the Xinca Parliament, received a death threat by a man in Aldea El Volcancito (east Guatemala). Three weeks earlier, another member of the Xinca Parliament, Julio David González Arango, was shot by an armed man in Mataquesuintla (south east Guatemala). Luis Fernando and Julio David have been defending the rights of the Xinca people from the impact of the Pan American Silver's Escobal mine and faced attacks in the past due to their work. We call for a prompt, independent, and impartial investigation into these attacks and any other previous aggressions against the Xinca People.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Consuelo Porras
General Attorney
Guatemala

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Twitter: @MPguatemala

Dear General Attorney,

I am writing to express my concern about the recent attacks against Xinca defender Luis Fernando García Monroy in Aldea El Volcancito, in the Santa Rosa department, east Guatemala. According to the defender, on 7 February 2021, a man allegedly linked to a mining company operating in the region and two other men intercept him on the road. The man insulted and threatened him and his relatives, and together with the other two men tried to force Luis Fernando to get out of his car. Luis Fernando García's 17 years old brother, who arrived in a motorcycle at the scene shortly thereafter, was hit and injured by the same man. These events occurred after a series of attacks against other members of the Xinca Parliament. On 16 January 2021, Xinca defender Julio David González Arango was shot and seriously injured by an armed man in his property in Mataquesuintla, a town in the Jalapa department, south-east Guatemala.

We call on you to conduct a prompt, independent, and impartial investigation into the attacks against Luis Fernando García Monroy and Julio David González Arango and any previous aggression against the Xinca People taking into account the fact that these crimes may have been linked to the victims' work defending human rights, and to bring those responsible to justice.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In April 2013, the Guatemalan Ministry of Energy and Mines granted to the company Tahoe Resources an exploitation license for the Escobal mining project. After that, the conflict around the mine escalated. On 27 April 2013, security guards at the mine site fired tear gas and rubber bullets on community members protesting outside the mine's entrance, injuring some of them. For more information, see: [Mining in Guatemala: Rights at risk](#) (AMR 34/002/2014).

In 2019, the Canadian based mining company Pan American Silver completed the acquisition of Tahoe Resources, adding the Escobal mine to its portfolio. However, mining activities in Escobal have been paralyzed since 2017. After several appeals from the Centre for Environmental, Social and Legal Action (CALAS), who previously defended the rights of communities affected by the San Rafael mining company, the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ) of Guatemala ordered a provisional suspension and the completion of a community consultation with the Xinca people.

Members of CALAS reported reiterated acts of intimidation and harassment against them. For more information see Urgent Action: [Smear Campaign against Human rights defenders](#) (AMR 34/6680/2017). Lawyer Quelvin Jimenez, defender of the rights of the Xinca indigenous people, reported that on 23 June 2020 a group of armed people disrupted a meeting of the Xinca Indigenous People authorities, which he also attended, threatening and beating some of the participants (see [Urgent Action AMR 34/0733/2019](#)). He has faced smear and stigmatization campaigns on social media, judicial harassment, and received death threats and other forms of intimidation due to his work (see [Urgent Action AMR 34/0336/2019](#)).

According to Amnesty International's research, human rights defenders in Guatemala carry out their activities in an extremely hostile environment. Defenders are also regularly targeted with smear campaigns aimed at stigmatizing and discrediting them by private actors and the Guatemalan authorities. The criminal justice system is regularly misused, defenders are falsely accused and prosecuted trying to keep them silent and break up movements and organizations.

Those working on rights related to land, territory and the environment are particularly at risk. With continuous threats, intimidation, and attacks against them. For more information, see: [We are defending the land with our blood: Defenders of the land, territory and environment in Honduras and Guatemala](#) (AMR 01/4562/2016).

The Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Guatemala (UDEFEQUA) reported more than a thousand of attacks against human rights defenders in 2020, including 15 killings, and 22 attempts of killings.

Guatemala has yet to adopt a public policy for the protection of human rights defenders, which was ordered by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in 2014 in the judgement Human Rights Defender et al. vs Guatemala.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 12 April 2021

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Luis Fernando García Monroy; Julio David González Arango Xinca People Defenders (they/them)

And copies to:

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