

URGENT ACTION

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY ACTIVISTS MURDERED

Three human rights defenders from a Maya Q'eqchi' rural community were killed in Rio Dulce, Izabal, eastern Guatemala. The activists, all university students and campaigners for land rights, were found dead on 14 February. The rest of their community are in danger.

On 12 February, **Catalina Mucú Maas, Alberto Coc Cal** and **Sebastian Xuc Coc** from the indigenous Maya Qeq'chi community Quebrada Seca, left their community which is situated on a river at 6.30 am by boat to attend university in Rio Dulce, in the Izabal department. They reached their destination two hours later and left their boat at a dock. At 2.00pm Alberto Coc Cal and Sebastian Xuc Coc went back to the dock to have lunch in a nearby cafe. Half an hour later, an unknown man asked for them at the cafe, but they had already left.

Alberto Coc Cal, Catalina Mucú Maas and Sebastian Xuc Coc finished their classes around 5.00pm and were joined by Amilcar Choc, a friend. The four started making their way back towards the Quebrada Seca community. Catalina Mucú Maas called her relatives by mobile to tell them she was coming back. After that call, there was no contact with the activists. Family members asked for the authorities help in finding them.

At 2.00pm on 13 February, members of the community found the boat with several bullet holes and traces of blood. The activists were not there, but their backpacks were found. Members of the community began searching for the students on the following day. On 14 February, Alberto Coc Cal, Catalina Mucú Maas and Sebastian Xuc Coc were found dead, their bodies floating on the water around the same area where the boat was the day before. On 15 February, the body of their friend, Amilcar Choc, was found 1 km away. They had all been shot numerous times and had apparently been shot in coup de grace manner..

The three defenders killed were active in promoting the rights of the Quebrada Seca community. They had participated in negotiations on a land dispute in the area. Other community activists have received death threats recently, and members of the community are now at risk, fearing to work their lands and continue their daily activities.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling for an independent, thorough and impartial investigation by the Prosecutor's office into the killing of the four individuals, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- Urging that the authorities take immediate steps to provide appropriate protection to the Quebrada Seca community

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 5 APRIL 2011 TO:

Attorney General

Claudia Paz y Paz Bailey
Fiscal General de la República
Ministerio Público
15ª Avenida 15-16, Zona 1, Barrio
Gerona
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Fax: +502 2411 9124
Salutation: **Dear Attorney General /
Estimada Sra. Fiscal General**

Ministry of Interior

Lic. Carlos Menocal
Ministro de Gobernación
6ª Avenida 13-71, Zona 1,
Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA
Fax: +502 2413 8658
**Salutation: Dear Minister /
Estimado Sr. Ministro**

And copies to:

UDEFEGUA
UDEFEGUA – Unidad de protección a
defensores y defensoras de derechos
humanos
1 Calle 7-45 zona 1, Oficina 2-b,
Ciudad de Guatemala
Guatemala
E-mail: udefegua@yahoo.com

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

According to local sources, the relevant authorities – Ministry of Interior (Ministerio de Gobernación) and Public Prosecutor's Office (Ministerio Público)- responded to the community members calls for searching the bodies and for visiting the crime scene with delay. The Public Prosecutor's Office, for example, did not collect crucial evidence such as the defenders' backpacks, which were returned to their relatives, and four bullet casings.

Amnesty International is concerned that the evidence is not collected according to best practice, thus having an impact on the standards of the investigation. Additionally, the relevant authorities did not investigate into the threats and other incidents that members of the community had denounced in recent weeks. Amnesty International has previously raised concerns about the authorities practice when investigating crimes in the following reports: "Guatemala: No protection, no justice: killings of women in Guatemala" (AMR 34/017/2005); "Guatemala: No protection, no justice: killings of women (an update) " (AMR 34/019/2006).

Amnesty International is concerned for the situation of human rights defenders in Guatemala, who constantly face attacks and threats because of their legitimate activism. Most of the incidents involving human rights defenders result in impunity. See the report "Central America: Persecution and resistance: The experience of human rights defenders in Guatemala and Honduras" (AMR 02/001/2007)

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