

URGENT ACTION

INDIGENOUS LEADER SHOT

On 16 January 2021, Xinca defender Julio David González Arango was shot by an armed man on a property he owns in Mataquesuintla, a town in the Jalapa department, south-east Guatemala. Julio González is now safe and recovering from injuries. He has been a public leader defending the rights of the Xinca people against the Pan American Silver's Escobal mine and has been attacked in the past due to his work. We call on the Guatemala's General Attorney to conduct a prompt, independent, and impartial investigation into the attack against Julio González and any other previous aggression against the Xinca People.

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

Consuelo Porras
General Attorney

Guatemala

Email: secretariageneral@mp.gob.gt

Twitter: @MPguatemala

Dear General Attorney,

I am writing to express my concern about the recent attack against Xinca defender Julio David González Arango in Mataquesuintla, Jalapa department, Guatemala. On 16 January 2021, one armed man arrived at a González's property and shot him. He was seriously injured. Julio González and other members of the Xinca People have been previously attacked for their work defending the rights of the Xinca people. Investigations into these attacks are pending.

We call on you to conduct a prompt, independent, and impartial investigation into the latest attack against Julio David González Arango and any previous aggression against the Xinca People, and to bring those responsible to justice.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In April 2013, the Guatemalan Ministry of Energy and Mines granted Tahoe Resources an exploitation license for the Escobal mining project. After that, the conflict around the mine escalated. On 2 May 2013, the government of Guatemala declared a state of emergency in and around San Rafael Las Flores, a town some 90 kilometres from the capital, following a series of violent incidents around the mining operation of Minera San Rafael, a subsidiary of the Canada and US-based Tahoe Resources Inc. Previously, in January 2013, unknown armed men attacked the mine site resulting in the deaths of two security guards and another person, presumed to be part of the group attacking the site. For more information, see: *Mining in Guatemala: Rights at risk* (AMR 34/002/2014).

In 2019, Canadian based mining company Pan American Silver completed the acquisition of Tahoe Resources, adding the Escobal mine to the 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 Xinka people.

Members of CALAS have also 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 Xinka indigenous people, reported that on 23 June 2020 a group of armed people disrupted a meeting of the Xinka Indigenous People authorities, which he also attended, threatening and beating some of the participants (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 (AMR 34/0336/2019).

According to our 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. 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.

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

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 22 March 2021

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Julio David González Arango (he/his)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: N/A