

3 julio 2019

Guatemala: further attacks and attempted break-ins against Central Campesina Ch'ortí Nuevo Día

On 1 July 2019 the Central Campesina Chortí Nuevo Día suffered an attack against one of the members of the organization and damage to the building's facade. This is believed to be linked to a mining project to which the organization has been peacefully resisting for the last months. These attacks are carried on in a week in which two break ins have also been attempted and gunshots were fired outside the resistance.

[The Nuevo Dia Ch'ortí Indigenous Association](#) (Central Campesina Ch'ortí Nuevo Día, CCCND) provides legal support and visibility to indigenous Chortí communities in the region of Chiquimula, Guatemala. The communities supported by the organisation face threats and human rights violations due to the implementation of hydroelectric and mining projects on their territories.

On 1 July 2019, the alleged owner of Cantera Los Manantiales, in Olopa, Chiquimula, violently tried to break-up the occupation that Ch'ortí communities have maintained for four months now as a peaceful demonstration against the mining project that the company carried out without prior consultation and in violation of international legal conventions. When he was challenged by members of the community, he and his son violently attacked members of the community and called their personal security staff and others, who shot at the building of the association repeatedly. In the midst of the attack, one of the perpetrators hit indigenous authority Irma Mendez, provoking bruises and contusions in her face. In this violent outburst, they also damaged one of the organizations motorcycles. When the police showed up to gather evidence and take a statement, there was a dialogue between the members of CCCND and the owner of Cantera los Manantiales, however, no one was arrested.

On 25 and 20 June 2019, there were also two attempted break ins into the organization's offices, leaving the windows broken, CCTV cameras manipulated and a series of instruments around the office that may have also been used to break in without success.

On May 2019, Front Line Defenders [stated concern](#) due to direct threats and intimidation attempts by local authorities and individuals linked to the mining project Cantera de los Manantiales, INCAMIN S.A, and the development project Interoceanic Corridor in the previous months, on a daily basis, against members of the Central Campesina Chortí Nuevo Día. On 2 May 2019, a former member of the organisation was killed in connection with its work. Human rights defenders from the Maya Chortí indigenous communities in Chiquimula have been the target of increased and coordinated smear campaigns and threats for defending their right to free, prior and informed consent to any activities on their lands.

Front Line Defenders remains concerned at the [continuous attacks against the CCCND](#), and the attempts to break-in the organizations offices, as they are believed to be directly linked to their legitimate human rights work. Front Line Defenders expresses further concern about the ongoing criminalisation of indigenous, environmental and land rights defenders working to protect their land and livelihoods in Guatemala.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Guatemala to:

- 1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the attack against Irma Mendez and attempted break-in against Central Campesina Chortí Nuevo Día, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;**
- 2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of all members of CCCND and their families, as well as all indigenous Maya Ch'ortí people, in consultation with them;**
- 3. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the right of indigenous peoples to free, prior and informed consent regarding the implementation of projects that might affect them, as enshrined in the International Labor Organisation Convention 169;**
- 4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Guatemala are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.**

Front Line Defenders respectfully reminds you that the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, recognises the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, their right to freedom of association and to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals. We would particularly draw your attention to Article 2 (1): "Each State has a prime responsibility and duty to protect, promote and implement all human rights and fundamental freedoms, inter alia, by adopting such steps as may be necessary to create all conditions necessary in the social, economic, political and other fields, as well as the legal guarantees required to ensure that all persons under its jurisdiction, individually and in association with others, are able to enjoy all those rights and freedoms in practice."; and Article 12 (2): "The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration."

Please inform us of any actions that may be taken with regard to the above case.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Anderson
Executive Director