

September / October 2020

## **GUATEMALA:** **Help free an unjustly imprisoned environmentalist**

Bernardo Caal Xol (pronounced Kal Shol) is a teacher and water protector in northern Guatemala. He has committed no crime, yet he has been in jail for over two years. Well that's not fair, is it?!

The government wanted to stop opposition to the dams. So they arrested Bernardo, accused him of a crime he did not commit and said he was guilty even though there was no evidence.

Bernardo is a respected leader of Maya Q'eqchi' (pronounced ke chi) Indigenous communities. They asked him to take legal action on their behalf to stop the damming of the Cahabón River.



Indigenous teacher Bernardo Caal Xol spoke up to protect the river that his communities depend on for survival. He should not be in prison for one more day.  
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The dams would create electricity and profit for some.

But dozens of Indigenous communities oppose the dams because they violate their human rights and seriously affect the environment on which they depend. There would be fewer fish and less access to water, both of which the communities need to survive.

Bernardo says: "They sentenced me for robbery. I am not a thief. On the contrary, they are stealing natural resources. They are stealing the river."

Guatemala has a history of jailing Indigenous activists to silence them. Bernardo should not be in jail at all.

During the pandemic, there's an extra worry. Bernardo is in danger of getting COVID-19 because of crowded conditions in jail.

Please speak up now. Call for Bernardo to be freed. Your message could be a lifesaver!

## WHAT CAN I DO?

Please write a short, polite letter to Guatemala's Attorney General.

- Start your letter with Dear Attorney General.
- In your first sentence, tell him about your school, your grade or your teacher. This makes your letter different from the others he will receive.
- Then explain how you feel about the unjust imprisonment of Bernardo Caal Xol that does not respect his human right to express himself peacefully and even threatens his health. Be sure to underline his name or write it in capital letters to make it stand out.
- In your last sentence, ask for Bernardo Caal Xol to be set free right away because he committed no crime and should not be in jail one more day.



## WHERE DO I SEND MY MESSAGE?

Attorney General Consuelo Porras  
c/o Embassy of Guatemala  
130 Albert Street, Suite 1010  
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5G4

Email: [carrecis@mp.gob.gt](mailto:carrecis@mp.gob.gt) or  
[embassy1@embaguate-canada.com](mailto:embassy1@embaguate-canada.com)



*Map of Guatemala  
courtesy of  
University of  
Texas  
Libraries*

## WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?

Two things!

Sign the petition at <https://www.amnesty.ca/freebernardo> and share it with others. Thanks!

Let Bernardo Caal Xol and his family know you are speaking up for him to be freed. Email your greeting, photo or copy of the letter you send to the Attorney General, to [kprice@amnesty.ca](mailto:kprice@amnesty.ca). In the subject line, write Message for Bernardo Caal Xol. Your message could be these words in Spanish: Bernardo Libre! Justicia! (which means Free Bernardo! Justice!)

If you have not received this Lifesaver directly from Amnesty International's Toronto office and would like future actions, reach us at the contact information in the header. There is no cost.