

Background Information

In 2017, Guatemalan organizations reported 493 attacks on human rights defenders. The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation facing human rights defenders notes that Guatemala is one of the most dangerous countries in the world in which to be a human rights defender, especially for those working on land, territory and environmental issues.

To highlight how dangerous the situation is for these defenders, Guatemalan NGOs report that since the start of 2018, 12 defenders have been killed for their work defending land and environment. Six defenders working for peasant farmer organizations have been killed since mid-May.

- **Luis Arturo Marroquin, age 47**, working for the Comité de Desarrollo Campesino (CODECA) in San Luis Jilotepeque, Guatemala
- **Jose Can Xol, age 37**, working for the Comité Campesino del Altiplano (CCDA) in Choctún Basilá, Cobán
- **Mateo Chamám Paau**, age 31, working for the CCDA in San Juan Tres Rios, Cobán.
- **Ramon Choc Sacrab**, working for the CCDA in Ixloq, San Pedrito, Cobán.
- **Florencio Pérez Nájera**, age 42, working for CODECA in Llano Largo, Jutiapa
- **Alejandro Hernández García**, age 40, working for CODECA in Llano Largo, Jutiapa

We call on the Attorney General of Guatemala to initiate a prompt, impartial, and thorough investigation into the murders and that the material and intellectual perpetrators be brought to justice for these crimes. Amnesty Canada stands in solidarity with their families and organizations.

We also call on her to publicly condemn the killings and to recognize the important and legitimate work of human rights defenders in Guatemala. CODECA and the CCDA carry out legitimate and important work throughout the country on behalf of Indigenous peoples and small-scale farmers and must be free from intimidation and threats in order to do their work.

We call on all Guatemalan officials, including the President of the Republic, to refrain from using language that stigmatizes, disparages, or discriminates against human rights defenders. Such language includes calling human rights defenders – and in particular those defending land, Indigenous rights, or the environment – ‘anti-development’, ‘eco-terrorists’, or ‘anti-patriotic’ and serves to undermine the legitimate concerns and safety of these defenders.

In addition to ensuring a robust investigation into these and other attacks on human rights defenders, we call on the incoming Attorney General, Maria Consuelo Porras, to ensure her office fully and immediately implements the ***General Instruction to investigate crimes committed against human rights defenders*** signed and adopted by her predecessor, Lic. Thelma Aldana. This includes ensuring that the work to investigate and track patterns of crimes against defenders is fully resourced, transparent, socialized throughout the country, and shared widely with Guatemalan civil society.

For more information, please visit <http://www.amnesty.ca/our-work/issues/guatemala-dont-undermine-our-rights>