

Rights Action
October 21, 2015

Organizational Sign-On letter

Call for Sign-ons: Another Shooting in Guatemala Linked to Tahoe Resources

If your organization can sign this letter (below), respond to Jen Moore *today* at: jen@miningwatch.ca.
Thank-you. Grahame Russell

Call for Sign-Ons: Response to shooting attack in Mataquescuintla, Guatemala

Please consider signing onto the letter below in response to the shooting attack against six men in Mataquescuintla on Saturday night, including Alex Reynoso, father of Merilyn Topacio who was murdered in April 2014, when Alex was also shot. Alex and two other men were injured in the attack.

Thanks to NISGUA and BTS and all who have been accompanying Alex and others in Guate, reporting back, and who got this draft letter going.

We're going to collect sign-ons until midnight on Wednesday October 21st in order to send the letter on the morning of Thursday October 22nd.

If you and/or your organization would like to sing this letter (attached) please respond to Jen Moore at: jen@miningwatch.ca before this Thursday.

Thanks and hope to hear from you soon.

Best, Jen

October XX, 2015

TO:
Attorney General of Guatemala
Head of Special Prosecutor on HR in Guatemala

CC:
President of Guatemala
Head of Ministry of the Interior
US Embassy in Guatemala
Canadian Embassy in Guatemala

The below-signed organizations express their alarm following a shooting attack this past weekend against six people in Mataquescuintla, Jalapa, Guatemala, where communities have organized in peaceful resistance to Tahoe Resources' Escobal mine project for years. Three were injured in the attack, including Alex Reynoso, who was previously shot and injured in another attack in 2014 that cost the life of his daughter, Merilyn Topacio.

We are profoundly concerned for the safety of Mr. Reynoso, his family, and other members of the peaceful resistance to mining in Mataquescuintla, Guatemala and surrounding areas. We condemn this violence, demand a full and impartial investigation into what took place and repeat our earlier demands for a full and impartial investigation into all prior incidents of violence in connection with Tahoe Resources' Escobal project in southeastern Guatemala.

On Saturday, October 19, Alex Reynoso – environment defender and member of the Mataquescuintla resistance against mining in southeastern Guatemala – was shot along with two other men. Alex remains in stable condition in the hospital, recuperating from a bullet wound that entered his lower back. The other two men were treated and released with minor injuries.

Unknown assailants shot the men shortly after they had left a meeting with the mayor of Mataquescuintla, Hugo Loy, on Saturday evening, while they were driving home. They were a few kilometers outside of town when the attack occurred.

This latest incident follows a pattern of attacks against land and environment defenders opposing mining operations across the country, particularly those who oppose Tahoe Resources' Escobal mine in the region of Santa Rosa and Jalapa in southeastern Guatemala. Alex faced a similar armed attack in April 2014 that left him seriously injured; his 16-year-old daughter, Topacio Reynoso, who was with him at the time, was shot and killed.

Among other violent incidents in connection with this project, seven men were wounded when private security guards opened fire on their peaceful protest in late April 2013; they are now suing Tahoe Resources for negligence and battery in a British Columbia court. Former head of security for Tahoe Resources, Alberto Rotondo, is under arrest awaiting trial for allegedly ordering the attack. He faces charges for bodily harm and obstruction of justice.

The Reynoso family has been at the forefront of the region-wide struggle in resistance to Tahoe Resources' Escobal project since 2010. Topacio was a leader of the Mataquescuintla youth movement against mining. Her father, Alex, is a community leader who has been recognized for his role in the organization of a community consultation in the municipality.

In November 2012, the municipality of Mataquescuintla held the first municipal referenda in the department of Jalapa, joining three other municipalities in Santa Rosa that have said 'no' to mining in their territory. During this referenda, more than 98% of participants voted against the presence of transnational mining activities on their lands and municipal authorities have respected the results ever since.

In December 2013, the Constitutional Court found in favour of the vote in Mataquescuintla, acknowledging the responsibility that municipal authorities have to convene such votes and to make decisions according to their results. This affirmed their value as the "adequate means by which peoples may exercise their right to give their opinion and be consulted on topics of interest." To date, there have been 14 community referenda in municipalities, towns and villages surrounding the Escobal

project in which tens of thousands of people have voted no to Tahoe's activities in the area.

Notable advances have taken place during the last month and a half with regards to the opposition movement to mining in the area, which may have provided a motive for this violent attack. During the first round of national elections on September 6, the mayor of Mataquescuintla, Hugo Loy, won his second term in office running on an anti-mining platform. On October 9, the community referenda on mining in Mataquescuintla was brought back into the spotlight when the Diario Centro America officially published the 2012 results and an article in Prensa Libre indicated that municipal authorities would pass unprecedented legislation to limit the presence of mining operations in their territory.

We are very concerned with the pattern of violence and persecution of environment defenders and community leaders who oppose Tahoe's mine project. It is vitally important that the killing of Topacio Reynoso and the repeat attacks against Alex Reynoso and others in Mataquescuintla not remain in impunity. We call for a full and impartial investigation by the Special Prosecutor's Office on Human Rights in order to ensure justice and to prevent further violence in the region. We also demand that the Ministry of the Interior ensure protective measures for Alex Reynoso, according to what he and his family request.

Finally, we reiterate our deep commitment to work in solidarity with communities affected by Tahoe's Escobal project, who are defending their land, their lives and their environment. We join with them to demand respect for the results of the community referendum in Mataquescuintla, as well as others in the surrounding area, through which they have soundly rejected mining on their territory. We also persist in demanding an end to impunity for US and Canadian mining companies operating around the world, calling upon US and Canadian authorities to ensure that Tahoe Resources and others can be held to account at home for the many harms happening abroad in connection with their projects.

Signed ...

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