

Sign-on Statement

Solidarity With Angélica Choc & Other Women In Danger For Defence Of Land, Water, Life

<http://us9.campaign-archive2.com/?u=ea011209a243050dfb66dff59&id=0dd1ecaab6>

Please consider signing this statement – as an individual and/or organization – concerning recent attacks against Angélica Choc in Guatemala, Máxima Acuña in Peru, and other women struggling in defense of land, water and life, in the face of large-scale mining and hydroelectric projects in different parts of Latin America.

- Deadline: Tuesday, September 27, 2016
- Send your sign-on to: Jen Moore, Mining Watch Canada, jen@miningwatch.ca
- Please share this Statement widely
- Send this statement to your Member of Parliament, Congress and/or Senate, urging them to sign on

This statement will be presented to Angélica Choc on September 29th when the life and struggles of her murdered husband Adolfo Ich will be commemorated. It will form the basis for an appeal to governments demanding respect for Indigenous rights, safety for those who are fighting mega-projects in defense of land, water and life, as well as an end to impunity for North American corporations and investors implicated in repression, violent evictions, corruption and impunity abroad.

Statement

Solidarity With Women Defenders & All Defenders of Water, Land, Life & Territory

We, the undersigned, express our solidarity with Angelica Choc and family after gunshots were fired against her home on Friday, September 16, 2016. The attack occurred just after midnight. Four bullets impacted the walls of her home where Angelica and two children were sleeping.

This most recent attack comes as the criminal trial in Guatemala for the murder of Angelica's husband Adolfo Ich - which took place on September 27, 2009 - nears its conclusion, and as the civil case in Canada against HudBay Minerals for negligence in connection with this and other serious human rights violations [moves forward](#).

We are deeply concerned about the rising number of attacks against human rights and land defenders throughout Latin America, particularly at the hands of multinational extractive

companies, as [recently reported by Amnesty International](#). An alarming number of these victims are Indigenous women.

We hold responsible not only the companies implicated in these acts of violence but also the home countries for supporting in multiple ways the expansion of corporate and investor interests while turning a blind eye to repression, human rights violations and environmental harms linked to those same economic interests.

The serious threats against Angelica and others involved in the case have been repeatedly denounced both nationally and internationally. We continue to support her courageous and dignified struggle for justice in the murder of her husband.

Angelica's husband, Adolfo Ich, was a Maya Q'eqchi' ancestral authority and teacher in his community of La Union, El Estor. On the day he was murdered, he heard gunshots from a nearby soccer field, where protesters had gathered in response to fears of further illegal land evictions to be carried out by police and private security guards on behalf of the Canadian company HudBay Minerals and its then Guatemalan subsidiary, Compañía Guatemalteca de Níquel (CGN).

As a respected member of his community, Adolfo went to the area to restore calm. He was recognized as an outspoken opponent to the mine, and according to eyewitnesses, was attacked upon arrival by mine security, led by Mynor Padilla, former military colonel and head of security for HudBay Minerals/CGN at their Fenix nickel mine project at the time. Adolfo was beaten, attacked by machete and shot. He died from his injuries.

The criminal trial against Mynor Padilla, accused of murdering Adolfo and causing serious injury to German Chub, has dragged on for more than one and a half years in Guatemala. Earlier this year, the judge – claiming that she felt threatened - ordered a closed-door trial, and since then, no press or international or national observers have been allowed to attend. The trial has been riddled with procedural and substantive irregularities, as well as allegations by the plaintiffs of racism by the judge. The long and arduous proceedings have caused serious personal and economic hardship to Angelica, her family and supporters, and lawyers. This is not the first attack against Angelica and she has denounced others since the criminal trial opened in Guatemala in March 2015.

Throughout Latin America, on a regular basis, people defending water, land and life are being killed, attacked, threatened, and persecuted.

In Brazil, Nilce de Souza Magalhães, known as Nicinha, was murdered in January 2016 after continually denouncing human rights violations committed by the consortium responsible for the Jirau hydro-electric project, Energia Sustentável do Brasil (ESBR). Nicinha, a leader from the Movement of Persons Affected by Dams (MAB), was part of a fishing village that was trying to protect the river and their livelihoods. As a result of her leadership and struggle, she was tortured, bound and murdered before being tied to a rock in the river.

In Honduras, Indigenous Lenca leader Berta Cáceres, winner of the prestigious Goldman Prize was murdered in March 2016 for her work defending rivers in Lenca Indigenous territory against the Agua Zarca dam project. Fellow activist and head of Otros Mundos/Friends of the Earth Mexico, Gustavo Castro Soto, narrowly escaped a point-blank range shot in the same attack. Berta was the leader of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) and since her murder, two other members of COPINH, Nelson García and Lesbia Janeth Urquía, have been killed. Threats and attacks against COPINH for their resistance to multinational hydro-electric dams and mining concessions in their territory continue. As part of a marred and unsatisfactory investigation, six men have been arrested so far for Berta's murder, including two with [direct ties](#) to the Honduran Energy Corporation (DESA). Berta's family and COPINH question the investigation, worried that it will not lead to convictions or the real intellectual authors of her assassination – who they believe are in the highest levels of government and the military – being identified and held to account.

In Peru, on the same weekend Angelica Choc's home was attacked, another Goldman prize winner was beaten and left in serious condition after an armed attack at her home. Farmer and outspoken opponent to South America's largest gold mining project, Maxima Acuña de Chaupe, and her partner Jaime, were severely hurt by armed men on September 18. Acuña's daughter reports that the attack was [lead by security](#) of Yanacocha, a subsidiary of US-based mining company Newmont. The World Bank is a longtime investor in the Yanacocha mine.

In Mexico, Esperanza Salazar, the coordinator of Bios Iguana A.C., and a member of the Mexican Network of Mining Affected Peoples, was recently forced to abandon her home and work in the state of Colima because of constant threats and intimidation. Esperanza and other members of Bios Iguana have faced stigmatization and threats from businessmen and state actors over the last few years as a result of their work with the Indigenous Council in Defense of Territory in Zacualpan, Colima. The Indigenous Council faces serious ongoing threats and aggression as a result of their opposition to mining and hydroelectric concessions on their land.

In Guatemala, just two months ago, Aura Lolita Chavez, from the K'iche' Peoples Council in Defense of Life, Mother Nature, Land and Territory, who has received numerous death threats and attacks, was publically threatened for speaking out against massive clear-cutting taking place in K'iche' territory.

September 27, 2016 is the seventh anniversary of the murder of Adolfo Ich. On this day, we reiterate our solidarity with Angelica Choc and her family and express our grave concern for her and the many others who are courageously defending their lives and territory against large-scale extractive projects despite the serious risks they face for doing so. We urge respect for communities' rights to say "no" to such projects and we condemn the use of force - political, legal and physical - to implement projects against the will and without the consent of those affected.

We wholly reject the use of threats, intimidation and violent attacks by governments and companies to repress and try to deter legitimate resistance to their projects. We demand that justice is served for attacks against land and rights defenders, and that the intellectual authors of such attacks are also prosecuted. Furthermore, we call for all necessary measures to be taken to ensure the safety of Angelica Choc and all the brave women and men who are fighting to defend their land and the wellbeing of their communities.

Your Funds At Work

Rights Action has supported the community, land and Mother Earth defense struggles of Berta Caceres and COPINH since 1998, and Angelica Choc and the Mayan Q'eqchi' people since 2004. Rights Action is sending on-going funds to the families of Berta Caceres and COPINH and the families of Angelica Choc and German Chub, so they can take extra measures of family safety, and continue to seek justice for the repression and crimes. To donate, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

- U.S.: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887
- Canada: (Box 552) 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

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More Information

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