

Solway Investment Group (Swiss mining company) & Guatemalan regime militarization of El Estor; Threats against Angelica, Ramiro & Maria Choc, & other Mayan Q'eqchi community defenders

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/solway-investment-group-mining-company-guatemalan-militarization-of-mayan-qeqchi-communities>

Government of Switzerland remains silent as Swiss company –Solway Investment Group– continues to illegally operate its militarized Guatemalan mine

Please write letters of protest and complaint to Swiss embassies in Washington DC, Ottawa, and Guatemala City, and to Solway Investment Group – Addresses below

July 17, 2020 – Air Forces helicopter illegally lands at home of Angelica Choc

This helicopter landed in front of hut of Angelica Choc, on community property of the Q'eqchi' village of La Union, El Estor. Her siblings Ramiro and Maria live houses away, and were present during this illegal incursion.



Angelica Choc at home, July 17, 2020. Soldier walked on to Angelica's plot of land.

The helicopter landed on the community soccer field named after “Prof. Adolfo Ich Chaman”, husband of Angelica Choc, local teacher, widely respected Q’eqchi’ community defender, who was assassinated September 27, 2009 - 150 meters from this spot - by security guards hired by then owner Hudbay Minerals.

(At the time, the Guatemalan military was collaborating with Hudbay Minerals and its security forces in ‘population control operations’ against local Q’eqchi’ communities and people – including Adolfo Ich – protesting the illegality, violence and harms being caused by the mine.)

Ramiro Choc: Angelica’s brother Ramiro is a courageous Indigenous rights and territory defender, known throughout various Q’eqchi’ municipalities in eastern Guatemala. From 2008-2014, he was jailed as a political prisoner due to his empowering, inspiring leadership.

Maria Cuc Choc: Angelica’s sister Maria is widely respected throughout El Estor as a tireless and empowering community defender. For the past 2 years, she has lived under the threat of imprisonment with false charges hanging over her head, and a “court date” that always gets delayed.



Community soccer game on Professor Adolfo Ich field (photo 2018).

CGN (Guatemala Nickel Company) headquarters are on other side of cement wall. CGN is Guatemalan subsidiary of first Skye Resources, then Hudbay Minerals, now Solway Investment Group.

When confronted respectfully and strongly by Angelica, Ramiro and Maria Choc, along with other community members, as to why the military helicopter landed illegally on community property, an officer with the feared Kaibiles “special forces” said they were forced to land due to “mechanical problems”.

In a Prensa Comunitaria report (July 18, 2020) - <https://www.prensacomunitaria.org/el-estor-un-helicoptero-militar-aterrizo-sin-permiso-en-el-barrio-la-union/> - Ramiro Choc denounces the presence of the military helicopter, as Angelica Choc talks with the officers in charge.

During the illegal incursion of July 17, a soldier, ominously and openly filmed the exchange with Angelica, Ramiro, Maria, Jose Ich (son of Angelica Choc and Adolfo Ich) and others. This sends a message to them, to the El Estor Union of Fisherpeople, and to all community defenders who have been protesting the illegality, harms and violations caused by the mine, that the regime knows who they are, where they are.

Shortly thereafter, when the government officials the soldiers were accompanying returned, the helicopter flew off.

July 18, 2020: Military state of siege declared

One day later, the military-backed regime of President Giammattei ([@DrGiammattei](#)) – the US, Canadian, Swiss-backed “democratic” government of Guatemala - declared a state of siege covering much of the Q’eqchi’ region of Guatemala, including the municipalities of El Estor, Morales and Livingston (department of Izabal) and Panzós and Santa Catalina la Tinta (department of Alta Verapaz).



July 19, 2020: Military occupation – El Estor

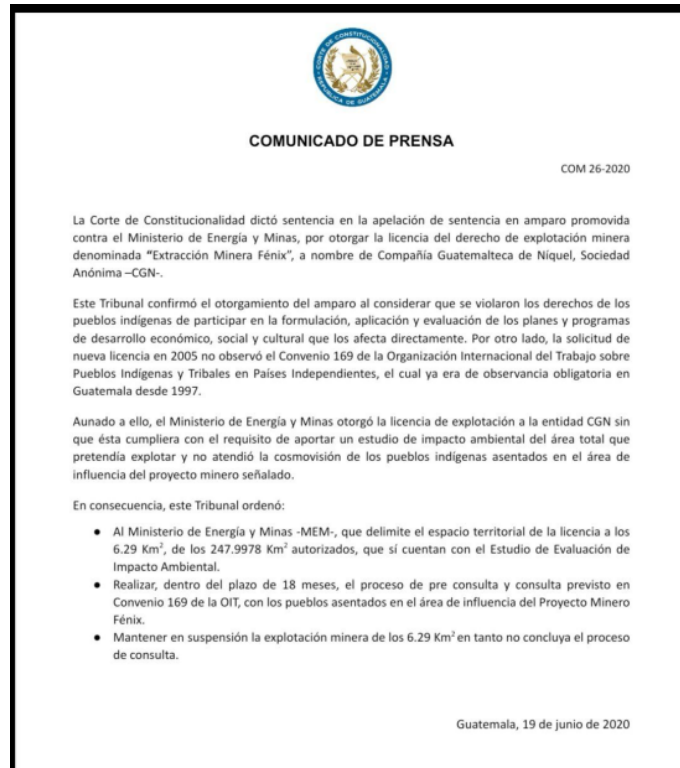
One day later, a convoy of US-backed Guatemalan forces rolled into El Estor to set up camp.



June 19, 2020: Constitutional Court ordered suspension of nickel mining operation

This aggression and unwarranted military state of siege – in the midst of increased hunger and suffering due to Covid19 – comes weeks after the Constitutional Court of Guatemala ordered the suspension of all Solway Investment Group/CGN mining activities in El Estor.

The Court concluded that the mine had been illegally operating, without a proper license or environmental impact assessment, since 2004 – through the ownership of Skye Resources (2005-2008), of Hudbay Minerals (2008-2011), and through to present with Solway Investment Group.



Constitutional Court of Guatemala press release, June 19, 2020,
with order to suspend the mining operation of CGN/Solway Investment Group

July 15, 2020: Lawyer Rafael Maldonado travelled to El Estor to meet with his clients, the Q'eqchi' members of the El Estor Union of Fisherpeople who had filed the legal complaint in 2017 challenging the legality of CGN's mining operation over the course of 16 years ... Skye Resources/ Hudbay Minerals/ Solway Investment Group.



Lawyer Maldonado (on right) hands copies of the Constitutional Court decision to members of the El Estor Fisherpeople's Union.

July 20, 2020: The Swiss-based mining giant is operating its mine 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, ignoring the suspension order. The militarization of El Estor is to intimate and silence all opposition to the illegal operation of Solway's mine.

We hold the Solway Investment Group completely responsible, and the government of Switzerland partially responsible, for the illegal (and now militarized) operation of this Swiss company, and for any more human rights violations, threats and intimidation against the Q'eqchi' people of the El Estor municipality.

More information

Grahame Russell, director Rights Action
grahame@rightsaction.org

*** / ***

Contact list

Solway Investment Group

Baarerstrasse 8, 6300 Zug Switzerland.

+41417400400

bd@solwaygroup.com

media@solway.ch

www.solwaygroup.com

Embajada de Suiza - Guatemala

Phone: +502 2367 5520

Email: guatemalacity@eda.admin.ch

Affaires consulaires: sanjose@eda.admin.ch

Embassy of Switzerland - Canada

Phone: +1 613 235 1837

Email: ottawa@eda.admin.ch

Embassy of Switzerland - US

Phone: +1 202 745 7900

General: washington@eda.admin.ch

Media: washington.media@eda.admin.ch

Chancery: washington.chancery@eda.admin.ch

Visa: washington.visa@eda.admin.ch

*** / ***

Rights Action's Community-defense/ Covid19 response fund

(Including Mayan Q'eqchi' Indigenous rights and territory defenders in El Estor)

Tax-Deductible Donations (Canada & U.S.)

Make check 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

Credit-Card Donations: <http://rightsaction.org/donate/>

Donations of securities in Canada and the U.S.? Write to: info@rightsaction.org

Bank-to-bank transfers? Write to: info@rightsaction.org

Go Fund Me campaign

<https://charity.gofundme.com/o/en/campaign/covid-19-supporting-communities-and-forced-migrants>

Please share this information widely

More information: info@rightsaction.org, www.rightsaction.org

Subscribe to e-Newsletter: www.rightsaction.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/RightsAction.org

Twitter: @RightsAction

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/rightsaction/>

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/rightsaction>