

Rights Action
December 13, 2021

Maya Q'eqchi' land & rights defender Angelica Choc speaks Habla Angelica Choc, defensora Maya Q'eqchi'

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/maya-qeqchi-land-defender-speaks>

Rights Action video, November 28, 2021

Espanol, with English sub-titles:

<https://youtu.be/qA5i2DzrS5k>



Angelica Choc – widow of assassinated Adolfo Ich and one of 13 plaintiffs in Hudbay Minerals lawsuits in Canada - denounces history of mining related violence & corruption in Maya Q'eqchi' territories, from INCO (1960s, '70s, '80s), to Hudbay (2004-2011), to Solway Investment Group (2011-present).

Angélica Choc – viuda del asesinado Adolfo Ich y una de 13 demandantes en los casos contra Hudbay Minerals en Canadá - denuncia historia de violencia y corrupción relacionada con la minería en territorios Maya Q'eqchi', desde INCO (los años '60, '70 y '80), pasando por Hudbay (2004-2011), hasta Solway Investment Group (2011-actualidad).

Favor de re-enviar esta denuncia

Please forward this statement widely.

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

English transcript

I am Angelica Choc from El Estor, Izabal, from the community Barrio La Union.

I am here to follow up on a video statement we made in our Q'eqchi' communities - with women from the community of Lote Ocho, plaintiffs in the cases [against Hudbay Minerals in Canada] - of the violence that we women have experienced.

We made that statement because we realized the pain we were suffering on that date, October 23. Now, I make this statement on November 28, about the reality of everything that the [Guatemalan government's] state of siege left us, in each family where there were raids by military and police.

For what reason?

The State of Guatemala is violating our rights as citizens. Supposedly the State of Guatemala is to protect our integrity, to give us security, but in this case it is not like that.

So, what happened, beginning on the 23rd [of October]? It is regrettable and sad.

We realized that military and anti-riot [forces] were accompanying the gondolas [double-sized mack trucks] of Solway [Investment Group], a Swiss company, that in the '60s, '70s, '80s was a Canadian company called INCO [International Nickel Company].

In those times, our grandparents, our brothers and sisters suffered the same as we are living today. Suffering, violating our rights. We have brothers and sisters who disappeared around that time. There were raids. There were rapes of women.

I realize it is the same situation we are living today. Nothing has changed. We are suffering.

When the mining company Hudbay Minerals entered in 2005, they started working. In 2007, there were violent and illegal evictions, where the communities' rights were violated. Houses were destroyed. Personal belongings were burned. There were belongings that were stolen.

But the saddest and most regrettable thing is that we women are the ones who pay with our bodies. As happened to the compañeras of Lote 8 who were sexually violated by military, police and private security of the company CGN. At that time it was CGN/ Hudbay Minerals.

Well, those years go by, and the evictions and abuses continue, until in 2009 they assassinated our community defender, the Maya Q'eqchi' indigenous leader Professor

Adolfo Ich Chaman [Angelica Choc's husband]. He was persecuted, until he was killed on September 27, 2009.

Then the Canadian company did business with the Swiss company Solway [Investment Group]. The Canadians [sold] the company [CGN] to the Swiss [2011], but they didn't change anything - there was no respect from the Swiss, the Russians.

They followed the same tactics. Let's remember our brother Carlos Maaz, a member of the Gremial de Pescadores [Fisherman's Union]. He was murdered [2017], as Adolfo was murdered.

So, nothing has changed. Now, the Gremial filed a lawsuit for denouncing the contamination of the beautiful lake [Lake Izabal] that we have here in front of us.

As a result of [that lawsuit], the [mining operation] was suspended. But we realize that it has not been complied with. The decision of the [Constitutional] Court in Guatemala has not been respected. Work continues.

And speaking of the resistance of our indigenous leaders, they were excluded from a supposed community consultation. That the community consultation process be done, yes, but our Ancestral Councils demand that they be taken into consideration and that they be the ones who manage in their own way how it is going to be, respecting Convention 169 of the ILO [International Labor Organization], where it states that we indigenous peoples should be consulted, and that it should be with our consent that the consultation be done.

But in this case it is the company that is managing it, together with people co-opted by them. They have organized their so-called "ancestral councils".

I am aware of all this and it is a sad reality for me as a defender. I am very hurt by this. It really worries me. I no longer want to live this nightmare. Of the violations of our rights.

Today, recently, a State of Siege was declared. And how many families have had their homes raided? Including my family. They were the first ones. I ask myself: What is going on? My family is humble. Our little houses are humble. It hurts me, it affects me.

When they came into my house ... Ahhh - to see my children screaming, when it was still night, when they shouted: "Don't kill my mommy, don't kill my mommy". These psychological damages, these traumas that they leave. It is difficult to recover from this.

It affects me today. How many families, how many brothers and sisters were displaced, leaving their homes, their families. Speaking of the Fishermen's Union, they live from fishing, and they had to move. And what happens to the families? Could it be that the State of Guatemala, the President, does not think about the safety and health of these families?

Today I realize that I am suffering in my family. If it hurts me, it is because it hurts me.

My son is part of the Ancestral Council elected by the people, by the communities. I say this with great respect and pride. Because they did not appoint themselves. They were elected.

And why do they have to be persecuted and why did they have to raid their house illegally? They broke into his house, throwing around all their things. The same in my children's houses. They were the first ones who were filled with the military and anti-riot police, as if we were drug traffickers.

My God, we are a very humble family. Why do we have to live like that? Why do I have to suffer like that? Why don't the companies respect our rights?

Why do they bring people from other places together here? They get together like a big gang and come after us, the owners of these lands. Here, we have been the guardians, we have been the ones who have taken care of this wealth that we have in our region [of El Estor] for years.

They should have more respect for us. We are not going to bother anybody. We are in our territory. And they come to plunder and steal from us. They come to raid our humble homes.

What do they intend to do? Put fear in us, kill us, disappear us. As they did during the armed conflict. Like brothers and sisters who disappeared. Like brother Pablo Bac [of Chichipate, 1981]. They disappeared him, and later he was found [dead] on one of the main streets of [El Estor].

And today again, like Amalia's husband [from Lote 8]. They detained him. He disappeared for 3 days without knowing where he was. And when we found out where they had him, they had already tortured him, they had already beaten him.

It is very sad what we are living through. It really hurts me. And I say it with great dignity. Because yes, we must be aware. The people of El Estor must be aware.

We have to take care of our beautiful lake. We have to protect it. Also the mountains, we have to take care of them. That is what we have to think about. What will happen later for our children? Where else are they going to go, those who were born in the town of El Estor, the day we no longer have water, mountains, fish, when the lake is polluted?

Maybe we will wake up there. Until then, maybe we will react. I don't know.

I say that all this is worrying. I am speaking out again to the national and international media about everything that I have spoken about. I am speaking out with great dignity as a Maya Q'eqchi woman. I feel and it hurts me what they have caused to each family.

How many women need medical attention? How many children are traumatized? There are, because there are, we are not going to say that there are not.

There is my family. There is my son's wife, who needed medical attention. So did I. I had to go for medical attention. My grandchildren need psychological care. Those traumas, who is going to help us with those?

The Guatemalan state must react, protect us and respect what we have, and be aware that we are Guatemalans. What we, the indigenous people, have taken care of is the beauty of our country.

So, I say this, and that it should be taken into consideration. The State of Guatemala has to reflect.

The community consultation that they are trying to carry out is not a legal consultation. It is illegal, because it has to comply with what the [decision of the Constitutional] Court has said.

They can sit down to dialogue, but if they now call for dialogue with our ancestral leaders, how are they going to sit down to dialogue knowing that what the Court has said about the suspension of the company has not been complied with.

As long as there is no suspension, we cannot negotiate. We must be transparent. We must be clear.

Then the people will say, the communities will say yes or no. Let's respect that.

That is what I hope for.

Thank you very much.

El Estor, November 28, 2021

Espanol

Soy Angelica Choc de El Estor, Izabal, de la comunidad Barrio La Union.

Estoy aqui nuevamente para darles seguimiento a un video donde nos manifestamos en las comunidades Q'eqchi', como tambien las compañeras mujeres de la comunidad de Lote Ocho, demandantes en los casos [contra Hudbay Minerals, en Canadá], de la violencia que hemos vivido nosotros las mujeres.

Nos manifestamos en ese momento porque nos dimos cuenta el dolor que estabamos sufriendo actualmente en esa fecha 23 de octubre [del primer video]. Ahorita me estoy manifestando el 28 de noviembre viendo la realidad de todo lo que nos dejó el Estado

de Sitio en cada familia en donde hubo allanamientos por militares y policías. Por qué motivo?

El Estado de Guatemala está violentando nuestros derechos como ciudadanos guatemaltecos. Supuestamente el Estado de Guatemala tendría que proteger nuestra integridad, darnos seguridad, pero en este caso no es así.

Entonces qué fue lo que pasó a partir del 23 [de Octubre]? Lamentable y triste.

Cuando nos dimos cuenta que militares y [fuerzas] anti-motines acompañaban a góndolas [camiones de carga] de la empresa Solway [Investment Group], una empresa Suiza lo cual antes era Canadiense en los años '60, '70, '80. Era una empresa canadiense llamada INCO [International Nickel Company].

También, en esos tiempos, nuestros abuelos, nuestros hermanos sufrieron. Lo mismo que hoy estamos viviendo. Sufriendo, violentando nuestros derechos. Tenemos hermanos que desaparecieron para esas fechas. Hubo allanamientos. Hubo violaciones a mujeres.

En este caso me doy cuenta que es la misma situación que estamos viviendo hoy en día. No ha cambiado nada. Estamos sufriendo.

Cuando entra nuevamente la empresa minera Hudbay Minerals en 2005, empiezan a trabajar. En 2007, hubo grandes desalojos violentos e ilegales, donde las comunidades fueron violentados sus derechos. Destruídos sus casas. Quemados sus pertenencias. Incluso hubieron pertenencias que robaron.

Pero lo más triste y lamentable es que somos las mujeres las que pagamos con nuestros cuerpos. Como le pasó a las compañeras de Lote 8 que fueron violadas sexualmente por militares, policías y seguridad privada de la empresa CGN. En ese entonces era CGN/ Hudbay Minerals.

Bien. Pasan todos esos años y vienen nuevamente, y siguen siguen los desalojos y abusos, hasta que en 2009 asesinan a nuestro defensor, Líder Indígena Maya Q'eqchi, el profesor Adolfo Ich Chaman [esposo de Angelica Choc]. Fue perseguido hasta que le dieron muerte, el 27 de septiembre de 2009.

Entonces la empresa Canadiense hizo negocio con la empresa Suiza Solway [Investment Group] en donde la Canadiense le entregó la empresa a los Suizos [en 2011] pero no cambiaron nada - no hubo respeto de parte de los Suizos, los Rusos.

Siguen las mismas tácticas. Recordemos a nuestro hermano Carlos Maaz, miembro de la Gremial de Pescadores. Fue asesinado, como fue asesinado Adolfo.

Entonces no ha cambiado nada. Ahora, el Gremial de Pescadores presentó una demanda por denunciar la contaminación del bello lago [Lago Izabal] que tenemos aquí enfrente.

Producto de [esa demanda], fue suspendida la [operación minera]. Pero nos damos cuenta que no se ha cumplido. No se ha respetado la decisión de la Corte [de Constitucionalidad] en Guatemala. Se sigue trabajando.

Y hablando de la resistencia, nuestros hermanos, nuestros líderes indígenas fueron excluidos en una supuesta consulta comunitaria el cual sí está autorizado. Que se haga la consulta comunitaria, si, pero nuestros Consejos Ancestrales reclaman que sean tomados en cuenta y que sean ellos que manejan a su manera como se va a ser, respetando el Convenio 169 de la OIT [Organización Internacional de Trabajo], donde manifiesta que nosotros los pueblos indígenas debemos de ser consultados, y que debe de ser con nuestro consentimiento que se haga la consulta. Pero en este caso es la empresa que la está manejando, junto con personas cooptadas por ellos.

Ellos han organizado sus "consejos ancestrales" supuestos. Me doy cuenta y es una triste realidad para mi como defensora. A mi me duele mucho esto. Me preocupa de verdad. Yo ya no quisiera vivir esa pesadilla. De los atropellos a nuestros derechos. De las violaciones a nuestros derechos.

Hoy, últimamente, se declara el Estado de Sitio. Y a cuántas familias fueron allanadas sus casas? Incluyendo a mis familias, a donde llegaron. Fueron los primeros. Me pregunto: ¿Qué pasa? Mi familia es humilde. Nuestros casitas son humildes. A mi me duele, me afecta.

Cuando entraron en mi casa ... Ahhh - ver gritar a mis hijos que todavía era de noche, cuando gritaban: "No maten a mi mamita, no maten a mi mamita". Estos daños psicológicos, esos traumas que dejan. Es difícil de recuperar.

Me afecta hoy en día. Cuántas familias, cuántos hermanos se desplazaron, dejando sus casas, sus familias. Hablando del Gremial de Pescadores, ellos viven de la pesca, y se tuvieron que desplazar. Y que por las familias. Será que el Estado de Guatemala, el Presidente, no piensa en la seguridad, la salud de esas familias?

Hoy en día me doy cuenta que en mi familia estoy sufriendo. Si me duele, porque me duele.

Mi hijo es parte del Consejo Ancestral elegido por el pueblo, por las comunidades. Con mucho respeto y orgullo lo digo. Porque ellos no se auto-nombraron. Fueron elegidos.

Y porque tienen que ser perseguidos y porque tuvieron que allanar su casa ilegalmente? Se metieron en su casa, tirando todas sus cosas. Igual en la casa de todos mis hijos. Fueron los primeros que se llenaron de militares, los antimotines, como si fuéramos narcotraficantes.

Dios mio, somos una familia muy humilde. ¿Por qué tenemos que vivir eso? ¿Por qué tengo que sufrir eso? ¿Por qué las empresas no respetan nuestros derechos?

¿Por qué se tiene que juntar personas de otros lugares? Se juntan como una banda grande y vienen sobre nosotros, los dueños de esas tierras, donde hemos sido los guardianes, donde hemos sido los que han cuidado durante años esta riqueza que tenemos en nuestro pueblo.

Deberían de tenernos más respeto. Nosotros no estamos yendo a molestar a nadie. Estamos en nuestro territorio. Y nos vienen a saquear y nos vienen a robar. Vienen a allanar nuestras humildes viviendas.

¿Qué pretenden hacer? Meternos miedos, asesinarnos, desaparecernos. Como hicieron en el conflicto armado. Como hermanos que desaparecieron. Como el hermano Pablo Bac [de Chichipate, en 1981]. Lo desaparecieron, y después se encontró [muerto] en una de las calles principales de nuestro pueblo.

Y hoy nuevamente, como el esposo de Amalia [de Lote 8]. Lo detuvieron. Desapareció 3 días sin saber en donde estaba. Y cuando nos enteramos donde lo tenían, ya lo habían torturado, ya lo habían golpeado.

Es muy triste lo que estamos viviendo. Si me duele de verdad. Y lo digo con mucha dignidad. Porque si, debemos de ser conscientes. El pueblo de El Estor debemos de ser conscientes.

Nuestro bello lago tenemos que cuidarlo, protegerlo. También las montañas, debemos de cuidarlas. Eso es lo que hay que pensar. ¿Qué pasará más adelante para nuestros hijos? ¿A dónde más se van a ir, los que han nacido en el pueblo de El Estor, el día que ya no tengamos agua, montaña, peces, cuando el lago está contaminado?

Hasta allí tal vez vamos a despertar. Hasta allí tal vez vamos a reaccionar. No sé.

Yo digo que todo eso es preocupante. Me manifiesto nuevamente ante los medios nacionales e internacionales todo lo que yo he hablado. Me manifiesto con mucha dignidad como mujer Maya Q'eqchi. Siento y me duele lo que le han causado a cada familia. ¿Cuántas mujeres necesitan una atención médica? ¿Cuántos niños quedan traumados? Hay, por que hay, no vamos a negar que no.

Allí está mi familia. Allí está la esposa de mi hijo, que tuvo que necesitar una atención médica. Yo igual. Tuve que ir a una atención médica. Mis nietos ahora necesitan atención psicológica. Entonces que, esos traumas, quien nos va a ayudar con esos?

El estado de Guatemala debe de reaccionar, protegernos y respetar lo que nosotros tenemos, y sean conscientes que son Guatemaltecos. Lo que nosotros hemos cuidado los pueblos indígenas es la belleza para nuestro país.

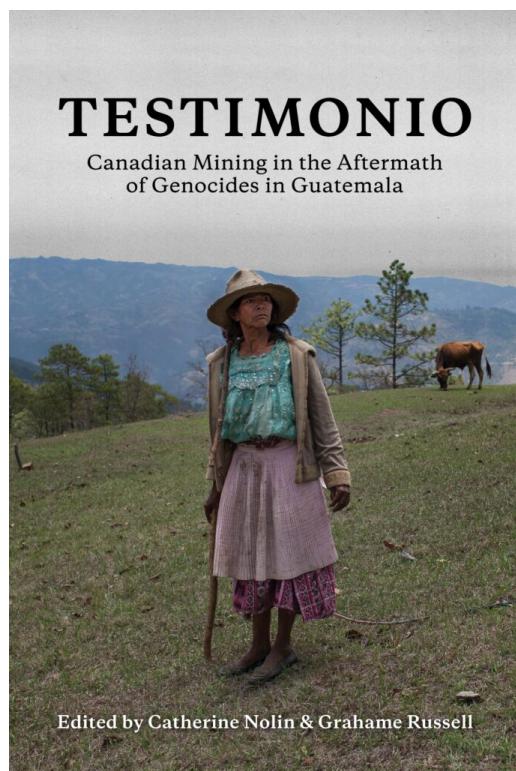
Entonces, yo digo esto, y que se tome en cuenta. El estado de Guatemala tiene que reflexionar.

La consulta comunitaria que pretenden hacer no es una consulta legal. Es ilegal, porque se tiene que cumplir con lo que la Corte [de Constitucionalidad] ha dicho.

Se puede sentar a dialogar pero si ahora convocan a diálogo con nuestros líderes ancestrales como se van a sentar a dialogar sabiendo que no se ha cumplido lo que la Corte [de Constitucionalidad] ha dicho, de la suspensión de la empresa.

Mientras no haya suspensión, no podemos negociar. Debemos de ser transparentes. Debemos de ser claros. Pues allí el pueblo dirá, los comunidades dirán, de sí o de no. Entonces respetemos eso.

Eso es lo que espero.
Muchas gracias
El Estor, 28 noviembre 2021



On cover, Diodora Hernández, a Mayan Mam woman who was shot in her eye (bullet exiting through her ear) near Goldcorp's mine, losing sight in one eye and hearing in one ear. Two men attempted to kill her, allegedly because she refused to sell her land to Goldcorp. Photo: James Rodríguez

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