

Maria Choc: “I haven't robbed anyone. I haven't murdered anyone. I am an Indigenous woman in Guatemala, defending her territories, her lands, her rights”

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/maria-choc-i-havent-robbed-anyone>

Maria Choc - sister-in-law of killed community defender Adolfo Ich, sister of Angelica Choc, sister of Ramiro Choc (spent 6 years in jail as a political prisoner – goes to court today, again, to face corrupted criminal charges for her land, rights and environmental defense work.



April 21, 2022, Photo: Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Network.

- Updates on Maria's hearing, BTS twitter feed: @BTS_MG (www.breakingthesilenceblog.com)

First detained and jailed –illegally– on January 17, 2018 (<http://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/arbitrary-detention-of-mara-magdalena-cuc-choc>}, Maria has been criminalized since then, living at home under strict movement and activities restrictions.

Numerous times, since then, Maria has been forced to arrive –with lawyers and accompaniers– to face the corrupted charges in court, only to have judges summarily suspend the trial for months on end.

Rights Action has been sending emergency support funds to Maria during this entire time, as this unjust “criminalization” – a widely practiced use and abuse of the Guatemala legal system against land, rights and environmental defenders - has ground her down emotionally, economically and taken a serious toll on her four children.

Maria Cuc Choc speaks September 9, 2020

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/i-havent-robbed-anyone-i-havent-murdered-anyone-i-am-an-indigenous-woman-defending-her-territories-lands-rights>

Very good afternoon, Grahame

I am surprised by your message – but really from the bottom of my heart, I thank you.

I am living the worst moment of my life. I never imagined I would get to this point.

I am living the pandemic. The COVID19. The coronavirus.

I'm living in a state of siege. I'm confronting the military.
And I'm facing this sickness, of them keeping me closed in.

But I also have the criminalization on top of it. I have the house arrest in which I have to report regularly to the courts.

I haven't robbed anyone. I haven't murdered anyone.

I am simply an Indigenous woman defending her territories, her lands, her rights.

And the rights of many brothers and sisters who are dispossessed, violated in their communities by the extractive companies, the monoculture companies, the hydro-electric companies, the oil companies.

My great enemy is those corrupt people in the government.

My great enemy is ex-president Otto Perez Molina, ex-deputy Rodrigo Lainfiesta Limolo and his foreman Joel Diaz.

I will go to court. They have cancelled my hearings for the fifth time.

This is the sixth time, which is on September 10, 2020.

But I'll go, and I'll ask my ancestors for a lot of strength, so that everything goes well.

I will endure all the injustices they intend to inflict on me.

My house is not the same anymore.

I feel like dying.

But I still find the strength. A woman who no longer lives happily with her children because she has to take refuge.

The children also have to hide. They have to beg for food from other families.

This is the consequence of criminalization, defending my rights and territory.

I am grateful for all your support, infinitely grateful for all the people who have helped me morally, psychologically, and economically.

Without even thinking of it - yesterday was September 5th, International Day of Indigenous Women.

We women resist. We are more creative. We women defend the territories. We become thousands.

We are healers, we are doctors, birth attendants, midwives, we are nurses, we are psychologists.

We are farmers, we defend the territory.

But there are also organizations that only take advantage of our work.

Thank you Grahame

From El Estor, Izabal, Greetings from Maria Choc

Rights Action has worked with Maria Cuc Choc since 2006. She has been 'criminalized' for her courageous, empowering land and indigenous rights work. For over 10 years, Maria has been a principal supporter of the 13 plaintiffs in the Hudbay Minerals lawsuits.

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