

Rights Action

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December 2022

28 Years, Supporting One Community Defense, Human Rights, Justice Struggle at a Time

In my 28th year with Rights Action, I can't thank you all enough for the years of trust in, and support for the work and struggles of our partner groups in Honduras and Guatemala, and for our education and activist work.

Our global human order is characterized by profound inequalities between rich and powerful countries and exploited, dominated countries of the global south, and between rich and powerful people and poor people inside most countries. The roots of these institutionalized inequalities dates back through centuries of imperialism, colonialism and post-colonialism.

"The history of the underdevelopment of Latin America makes up the history of the development of world capitalism. Our defeat was always implicit in another's victory; our wealth has always generated our poverty, in order to feed the prosperity of others."

— Eduardo Galeano

In this context, it remains a daunting challenge to create the 'political space' needed in which the majority populations of countries like Honduras and Guatemala can work safely to bring about the profound economic, land tenure, political and legal changes needed to promote the well-being of their entire populations and to live in respect of and balance with the environment, with la madre tierra.



Rights Action's November 2022 Testimonio human rights delegation to Guatemala. L-R: Steven Schnoor, Brian Gorlick, Kate Swanson, Catherine Nolin, Michael Bakal, Anika Rice, Grahame Russell, Alexandra Pedersen, Camila rich. Missing: Nano Valverde.

Supporting one community defense, human rights, justice struggle at a time, the work of Rights Action is ultimately aimed at helping achieve these profound economic, land tenure, political and legal changes, at the local, national, and global levels.

(continued)

TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS:

Make checks payable to "Rights Action" and mail to the appropriate US or Canadian office.

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www.rightsaction.org/donate/

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Speakers: Invite us to give presentations about these issues

Educational Delegations:

Form your own group or join one of our educational-solidarity delegation seminars to Guatemala and Honduras to learn more about these issues and struggles

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GUATEMALA: Back to normal

In our September newsletter and in numerous listserv postings (<https://rightsaction.org/subscribe>), we document Guatemala's return to a state of systemic corruption and impunity for the military-backed government, the traditional economic and political elites, and their "international community" business and political partners. On November 4, one more Judge was forced into exile, completing the regime's hollowing out and take over of the entire judicial system.

Guatemalan Judge Miguel Angel Galvez flees into exile

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/guatemalan-judge-miguel-angel-galvez-flees-into-exile>

The legal system is, again, simply a tool of repression and persecution in the hands of Guatemala's traditional elites and their international partners.

While this 'weaponization of the legal system' and forced exile of judges, prosecutors and lawyers –dating back to 2017– has been documented in the mainstream media in the U.S. (not in Canada), left out of all reporting is how the U.S. and Canadian governments have done nothing to challenge or sanction the systemic persecution carried out by the Guatemalan regime.

In fact, the U.S. and Canadian governments maintain full diplomatic, economic and military relations with their "democratic allie" in Guatemala, pushing endlessly for the expansion of North American business and investment interests in the country.

HONDURAS: Walking a tightrope of reform and change

The good news in Honduras is that the government of President Xiomara Castro has not yet been ousted in a U.S. and Canadian-backed military coup.

The hard reality is that the U.S. is leading efforts to pressure the new government not to implement any of the much needed legal, economic and land tenure reforms, that would impact on 'business as usual' for North American business and investor interests in different sectors of the global economy operating in Honduras.

U.S. Pressuring New Honduras Government

By Sarah Lazare, The American Prospect, October 28, 2022

<https://prospect.org/world/us-pressuring-new-left-wing-honduras-government-economic-zones>

Along Honduras' north, Caribbean shore, the Indigenous Garifuna people continue to suffer violent persecution and illegal, forced evictions from ancestral lands at the behest of for-export African palm producers and international tourism operators using corruption and violence to get control over coastal lands and beaches.

Garifuna Leader Faces Death Threats If He Does Not Leave Triunfo de la Cruz Community

By Marcia Perdomo, October 27, 2022

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/garifuna-land-rights-defender-receiving-death-threats-in-honduras>



Garifuna community members return from fishing, on ancestral waterfront lands being threatened. PC: Camila Rich

HIGHLIGHTED STRUGGLES

Maya Q'eqchi' land & environment defenders vs Mining: A 60-year human rights & justice struggle

Since 2004, and increasingly since 2010 when the landmark Highbay Minerals lawsuits were filed in Canada, Rights Action has prioritized support for Q'eqchi' land defenders in their decades-long resistance struggle against a series of Canadian companies and now a Swiss company. It is hard to overstate the suffering and toll the mining-linked repression, evictions and environmental destruction have taken on three generations of Q'eqchi' people.

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/reqchi-land-environment-defenders-vs-mining>

FAMDEGUA: Courageous 'crimes against humanity' justice struggles

Despite the 'weaponization of the legal system' and persecution by the Guatemalan regime, the Family Members of the Disappeared in Guatemala (FAMDEGUA) continues to spear-head crimes against humanity –including the Military Diary case– seeking justice for killings, disappearances and massacres committed by U.S. backed military regimes in the 1970s, 80s and 90s.

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/raising-funds-for-military-diary-crimes-against-humanity-trial>

Landmark Highbay Minerals lawsuits

Now entering their 13th year in Canadian courts, Rights Action continues to play a central role in supporting 13 Maya Q'eqchi' plaintiffs (and their families) seeking justice for mining repression linked to or caused by Highbay Minerals when it tried to operate the 'Fenix' nickel mine in the Q'eqchi' territories from 2004-2011. Rights Action is resolved



Alejandra Cabrera spoke with our Testimonio delegation. She is a member of FAMDEGUA, daughter of victims of U.S. backed repression in the 1980s, and witness-victim in the Military Diary case. PC: Steven Schnoor

to support the plaintiffs as long as it takes to hopefully achieve a measure of justice in Canadian courts.

Education & Activism

Related directly to our community funding work, some highlights of our on-going education and activist oriented work.

Educational Fact-Finding Delegation To Guatemala *Testimonio: Canadian Mining in the Aftermath of Genocides in Guatemala*

From November 5–13, Rights Action led our first delegation since January 2020. Over the course of 8 days, we spoke with Guatemalan human rights activist and experts, and travelled to four Indigenous and campesino-led community struggles resisting the corrupt and oft-times violent mining operations of Canadian, Swiss and American companies.

At www.testimoniothebook.org, find a trip photo-essay.

"Writing That Provokes"

Rights Action is pleased that **TESTIMONIO** was a finalist, and that **Border & Rule** won the 2022 Jim Deva Prize for "writing that challenges or provokes the ideas and forces that shape what society can become.

RECOMMENDED PODCASTS

TESTIMONIO: Canadian Mining in the Aftermath of Genocides in Guatemala

<https://soundcloud.com/bcyukon-bookprizes/s4-episode-26-grahame-russel-discusses-why-we-arent-talking-about-canadian-mining-in-guatemala/s-zSAZR39oIac>

Published by Between The Lines: <https://btlbooks.com/book/testimonio>

Available in U.S.: <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/testimonio-catherine-nolin>

More information:
www.testimoniothebook.org

Border & Rule

<https://soundcloud.com/bcyukon-book-prizes/s4-episode-19-harsha-walia-talks-about-drawing-inspiration-from-those-who-make-home-and-safety>

Published by Ferwood: <https://ferwood-publishing.ca/book/border-and-rule>

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Thank-you again for your trust and support.

For more information about any of the above, or for full proposals & budgets for the highlighted long-term struggles, contact me.

As always, continue to send comments and questions our way.

Grahame Russell
info@rightsaction.org

"I, like you, love love, life, the sweet enchantment of things, the sky-blue landscape of January days. My blood swells and I laugh through eyes that have known the flow of tears. I believe the world is beautiful and that poetry, like bread, is for everyone. And that my veins do not end in me but in the unanimous blood of those who struggle for life, love, little things, countryside and bread, the poetry of all."

Roque Dalton



Your Funds at Work

Most land and environment defense struggles, and human rights and justice struggles that Rights Action supports in Guatemala and Honduras play themselves out in the context of inter-generational government exploitation and repression, corruption and impunity, in partnership with the U.S. and Canadian governments and other economic actors in the so-called "international community".

<https://rightsaction.org/where-your-donations-go>



"Action is the mother of hope"

—Pablo Neruda