

# Rights Action

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September 2018

## What's going on?

**It is probably linked to the unjust global economy, in the unjust nation state system**

*"It could be your morning coffee, your bananas, your sugar, or the palm oil found in approximately half of all packaged products at your grocery store ... Land and environmental defenders were killed in record numbers last year."*

(Sandra Cuffe, <https://towardfreedom.org/archives/environment/activists-are-dying-for-your-food-environmental-defenders-murdered-in-record-numbers-last-year/>)

Beyond agribusiness, the mining, oil and gas industries are tied to violence and killings, evictions and environmental harms, as Rights Action supporters well know. Tying it all together, Naomi Klein reminds us that ever increasing environmental harms are linked to the unjust global economy. ("Capitalism Killed Our Climate Momentum, Not "Human Nature"", <https://theintercept.com/2018/08/03/climate-change-new-york-times-magazine/>)

The very functioning of the global economy, in the unequal nation state system, is a common denominator of human rights violations and repression, exploitation and environmental destruction, political interventions and coups, corruption

and impunity across the planet. Rights Action is proud to support and work with individuals and community groups:

- struggling to put an end to particular cases of repression, human rights violations and environmental harms linked to corrupt and violent business and investors interests; and
- working to defend and build a different economic vision and model wherein local communities are in charge of and responsible for maintaining a locally controlled economy, healthy environment and communities.

Each struggle Rights Action supports is local and, at the same time, taking on the global economy, taking on the wealth and (oftentimes) violent power of companies, investors and governments, near and far.

- **Below:** Updates on struggles Rights Action supports / Summary of your funds at work /How to donate

Thank-you for support for this vision of what we are working against and working for. Thank-you for your work in your own community in favor of an economic vision and model that is friendly to people, all life forms and Mother Earth.

Grahame Russell, *director*  
info@rightsaction.org

*"Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle."*

(Martin Luther King, Jr.)

### TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS:

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

**CANADA**  
(Box 552)  
351 Queen St. E  
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M5A 1T8

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20091-0887

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## FULL-TIME STAFF

Grahame Russell

## PART-TIME STAFF

Matthew Simpson

## GET INFORMED/ GET INVOLVED

**Speakers:** Invite us to give presentations in your community 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

### Daily News:

- [www.democracynow.org](http://www.democracynow.org)
- [www.theintercept.com](http://www.theintercept.com)
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## Justice in Honduras? Berta Cáceres assassination; Gustavo Castro attempted killing

On September 10, a trial is slated to start against the material authors of the March 2, 2016 assassination of Berta Cáceres and attempted killing of Gustavo Castro.

The Guatemala Human Rights Commission reports:

*"This case is a paradigmatic case for Central America and shares many similarities with land and indigenous rights defenders killed in Guatemala. After tremendous international pressure, the skilled work of the Honduran legal team, and with the courageous insistence of Berta's family and organization, COPINH, nine suspects have been arrested and the real story of Berta's murder is becoming clear.*

*"The gunmen who stormed her home were apparently coordinated by an active duty Honduran military intelligence officer together with a former military officer working in a private security company who had been hired by executives of the DESA Corporation. DESA sought to build the Agua Zarca dam in Lenca territory, a dam the communities opposed. Berta, as an effective and internationally recognized human rights defender, was a problem in the way of DESA's plans.*

*"There are well founded concerns that the Honduran state prosecutor is withholding evidence that could incriminate intellectual authors ... . The prosecutor's office has refused to comply with court orders to hand over the vast majority of the evidence it has gathered in the investigation." ([http://www.ghrc-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/180725-UA\\_BertaCaceres.pdf](http://www.ghrc-usa.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/180725-UA_BertaCaceres.pdf))*



Daughter Olivia marches with a banner of her mother Berta Cáceres: "Wake up humanity, there is no time."

## Hudbay Minerals lawsuits – Canada / Mynor Padilla murder trial – Guatemala

In July 2018, plaintiffs Angelica Choc and German Chub Choc were interrogated for four days in Toronto by Hudbay's lawyers during examinations for discovery (depositions). On September 27, 2009, Adolfo Ich (Angelica's husband) was killed by security guards working for Hudbay and its then subsidiary company CGN; German was shot and left paralyzed that same day.

Their interrogations followed upon three weeks of examinations for discovery in November 2017, of 11 women from the community of Lote 8, victims of gang-rapes in 2007 carried out by company security guards, police and soldiers as part of the illegal destruction and burning to the ground of their village.



Angelica being consoled by German on a break during her interrogation by Hudbay/CGN lawyers. (Photo July 11, 2018)

Meanwhile, the legally separate but overlapping criminal trial against Mynor Padilla, Hudbay/CGN's former head of security (for the direct killing Adolfo Ich and shooting-maiming of German Chub) continues with no end in sight in Guatemala. In September 2017, an appeals court completely overturned the trial court judge's acquittal of Padilla on all charges, and ordered a re-trial. Since then, Padilla's lawyers have filed numerous motions, challenging the appeal court decision, even as a separate criminal investigation was initiated against the trial court judge for possible criminal behavior related to her acquittal of Padilla.

## Free Edwin Espinal

Since January 2018, Edwin Espinal has been illegally detained in a military jail operated by the repressive and corrupt Honduran government that is backed by the U.S. and Canada. Edwin is the long-time partner of Karen Spring, director of the Honduras Solidarity Network and who worked, before that, with Rights Action.

Since the 2009 military coup, hundreds of Hondurans have been killed and assassinated for political reasons (the case of Berta Caceres being the most well-known) and hundreds more have been "criminalized" and jailed as political prisoners on trumped up charges (the case of Edwin Espinal being the most well-known).

Efforts continue to pressure the Honduran, U.S. and Canadian governments to secure his immediate release, along with all other people unjustly prisoned for political reasons, and to have the trumped up charges summarily dropped. Recently, Edwin wrote from his prison cell:

*"Comrades, Thank you for all of your solidarity. These actions are what give us the strength to survive in this hole, where we're constantly harassed as a form of psychological and emotional torture. But that's not enough to silence us or make us desist from our struggle. Now more than ever we want to continue struggling by your side."*

Campaign to free Edwin Espinal and all political prisoners in Honduras: [freedwinespinal@gmail.com](mailto:freedwinespinal@gmail.com); <https://www.facebook.com/freeEDWINEESPINALlibertad/>; <https://twitter.com/EdwinLibertad>; <http://freedwinespinallibertad.blogspot.com/>



**Edwin Espinal with Karen and her mom Janet.**

## Tahoe Must Go.

### Close the mine, affected communities demand

On August 14, 2018, community members delivered a letter to Tahoe Resources' CEO James Voorhees, and Kevin McArthur, its founder and Executive Chair. They demand permanent closure of Tahoe's mine and an end to the environmental harms, community division, militarization and repression the mine has brought into their lives.

*"Let us be clear: Our opposition to mining in our territory and the future of Tahoe's mine does not depend on the outcome of the legal case before the Constitutional Court. Our encampment in Casillas and peaceful resistance in the region will continue until the mine is permanently closed. We have already held our own processes of consultation in which the vast majority of people in the affected area have said no to mining. We will not change our minds. The time for dialogue was before Tahoe forced the mine on us in 2011. Now, all we want is closure."*

Letter: Tahoe Must Go. Close the mine, affected communities demand: <https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/close-tahoe-resources-mine-in-guatemala>

(continued)

## DONATIONS: Laptops, Digital Cameras, iPhones

If folks have used laptops, iPhones and/or digital cameras, that are of decent quality, that you would like to donate to Rights Action, that we would then give to our partner groups, let us know by email ([info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)) and we can take it from there.

**On-line campaign to Close Tahoe Resources' mine in Guatemala:** [https://org.salsalabs.com/o/676/p/dia/action4/common/public/?action\\_KEY=23220&okay=true](https://org.salsalabs.com/o/676/p/dia/action4/common/public/?action_KEY=23220&okay=true)

**Tahoe Resources on trial in Canada:** Even as Tahoe continues to try and operate its widely opposed (and likely illegal) mine in Guatemala, a hugely important civil lawsuit continues in Canada against Tahoe for mining-linked violence and shootings in 2013. (<https://tahoeontario.net/the-lawsuit/>)

## Aura Minerals still trying to dig up the dead for gold

A full blown community/ mother earth/ cemetery defense struggle continues in western Honduras, pitting rural farmers against Aura Minerals and MINOSA (its Honduran subsidiary) that are backed by the Honduran and Canadian governments and Aura's international investors and partners.

Aura Minerals workers were forced to stop illegally digging up graves in the Azacualpa cemetery due to courage and dignity of Floresmira Lopez and other community members.

"Holding a club in my hand, I prevented [Aura Minerals] from depositing my father's remains in another tomb", said Floresmira after Aura had illegally exhumed the remains of her father. (<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/holding-a-club-in-my-hand-i-prevented-aura-minerals-from-depositing-my-fathers-remains-in-another-tomb>)

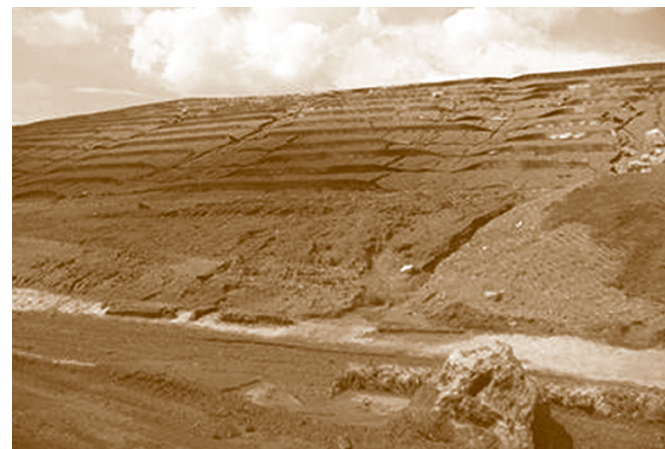


## Goldcorp's "Valley of Despair" in Honduras: Another Canadian mining legacy story from around the world. Health and environmental reparations needed, now

*Rights Action* letter to:

- Goldcorp Inc. directors, shareholders, investors including: CPP (Canada Pension Plan), BC-IMC, OMERS, OTPPF, United Church of Canada,
- Beneficiaries of Goldcorp "philanthropy" including: Ottawa U., Simon Fraser U., British Columbia U., YWCA Vancouver Metro, Rugby Canada,
- Canadian government officials and politicians

A comprehensive health and environmental reparations programme is needed urgently for the chronic, inter-generational health harms caused by Goldcorp's mountain-top removal, cyanide-leaching mine that operated from 2000-2008 in Honduras' Siria Valley.



**Goldcorp's mountain of cyanide-soaked earth, crushed rocks and minerals, left behind in Honduras**



*“Acid rain is not a myth. The inhabitants of the Valley of Siria, located about 120 kilometers from Tegucigalpa, know it well. The communities of Cedros, El Porvenir, and San Ignacio – three municipalities in the easternmost part of the Francisco Morazán department – were affected by the Canadian mining company Goldcorp Inc.’s open pit mining, another variant of the extractivist model. With the contamination of the waters of their rivers, the rain had to fall at some point, like a biblical prophecy.”*

(“Valley of Despair”, by Martin Calix)

Rights Action letter & “Valley of Despair” article: <https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/goldcorps-valley-of-despair-in-honduras>

“Valley of Despair” film (3 minutes, English subtitles): <https://youtu.be/saHRStgNf4>

## Rights Action on the go

### Edwin Espinal Must Be Released

After five days (May 20-25) of tense advocacy work in Honduras, meeting with Canadian, U.S. and Honduran government officials, our Simcoe County Honduras Rights Project/ Rights Action delegation was finally permitted to visit with Edwin Espinal in the “La Tolva” military jail.

“If Canada makes a statement regarding the release of a political prisoner in Saudi Arabia, it must do so for Edwin Espinal in Honduras, who is a loved member of the Spring family of Elmvale, Ontario.” (Janet Spring, mother-in-law of Edwin Espinal: <https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/canadian-govt-advocating-for-political-prisoner-in-saudi-arabia-w-cdn-family-connection-but-not-in-honduras-w-cdn-family-connection>)



Waiting at entrance to La Tolva military prison, May 24, 2018.

### UNBC-Rights Action Experiential Learning in Guatemala

- **Geographies of Culture, Rights & Power: The Global Order, Injustice and Resistance in Guatemala**

From May 5-18, 2018, Professor Catherine Nolin (UNBC geography) and Grahame Russell led their bi-annual “experiential learning” road trip with 10 undergrad and grad students. Since 2004, Catherine and Grahame have organized this course.

- “Faces and places resisting State and corporate violence, corruption and impunity in Guatemala”, by Grahame Russell, <https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/faces-and-places-resisting-state-and-corporate-violence-corruption-and-impunity-in-guatemala>

(continued)



## Human rights delegation to Guatemala: “Real life super heroes and the quest for mining justice in Canada and Guatemala”

From June 9-17, 2018, Rights Action led this road trip (coordinated with the Mir Centre for Peace, Castlegar BC) visiting communities resisting the violent and corrupted mining operations of Tahoe Resources, KCA (Kappes, Cassaday Associates) and Solway Investment Group/CGN (formerly owned by Hudbay Minerals).



**Chaabil Choch land recovery struggle:** After a 50 minute boat ride from Rio Dulce, we arrived at the remote community of Chaabil Choch. Hundreds of impoverished Q’eqchi’ villagers received us and shared stories of their struggle

to recover their lands and community (including a cemetery where over 200 ancestors lie buried) stolen from them by the U.S. and western-backed military generals in 1984.

Most recently, the “owner” was Otto Perez Molina, former army general during the worst years of genocides, massacres and disappearances, former president (2012-2015), friend to the U.S. and Canadian governments and North American mining industry ... until he was ousted from office in 2015 and is now in jail awaiting trial related to an organized crime network – La Linea – that he headed up while in office.

On October 30, 2017, the Guatemalan government sent 1800 troops and police to Chaabil Choch, burned their huts to the ground, destroyed their crops, killed their animals. Like the Lote 8 community (after their village was burnt to the ground twice in January 2007), the Chaabil Choch families fled to the forests, survived, and came back. They have nowhere else to go. Here they are, living peacefully, re-building again, trying every legal and political avenue open to them to recover their own lands.

## Documentary film: Hudbay Minerals lawsuits

From June 22-27, Grahame Russell accompanied an international film crew to the mining harmed communities of the Q’eqchi’ people in eastern Guatemala, to make a documentary film about the precedent setting Hudbay lawsuits working their way through Canadian courts.

## Angelica Choc and German Chub in Toronto: Hudbay Minerals lawsuits

From July 5-14, 2018, *Rights Action* hosted and supported Angelica Choc and German Chub, in Toronto to be deposed (examinations for discovery) by Hudbay’s lawyers. Photo-essays by Grahame Russell:

- <https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/hudbay-mineralscg-n-lawsuits-seeking-justice-for-rape-murder-repression-in-the-mining-industry>
- <https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/this-is-how-hard-it-is-8-years-into-the-hudbay-mineralscg-n-lawsuits>



# Your donations at work:

*Organizations, individuals and projects Rights Action has funded in 2018*

## GUATEMALA

### Community, environment, human rights defense struggles

- La Puya, resisting violent, illegal mining of Kappes, Cassidy & Associates: \$1,100
- CALAS (Centro de Acción Legal-Ambiental y Social), legal support for people suffering harms and violence linked to Tahoe Resources, KCA, CGN: \$2,150
- CODIDENA (Comision Diocesana Defensa de la Naturaleza), resisting harms and violence linked to Tahoe Resources: \$2,525
- FREDEMI (San Miguel Ixtahuacan defense front), advocacy related to Goldcorp's massively deficient mine "closure" plan: \$545
- Q'eqchi' territorial, rights and environmental defense committee, resisting harms and repression by CGN mining company, owned by Solway Investment Group (formerly by INCO, Skye Resources, Hudbay Minerals)
  - Support for Choc/Ich families, after killing of nephew: \$7,695
  - Legal team, criminal trial against Mynor Padilla, former Hudbay/CGN head of security: \$8,159
  - Q'eqchi' plaintiffs travel to Toronto (November 2017, July 2018) for Hudbay Minerals lawsuits depositions: \$13,217.36

### Community development

- Lote 8 women community re-building and humanitarian relief: \$6,890
- La Union women's pig cooperative: \$795

### Truth, Memory, Justice

- Commemoration, February 12, 1982, World Bank/IDB's Chixoy Dam/Xococ massacre: \$1,045
- Commemoration, March 13, 1982, World Bank/IDB's Chixoy Dam/Rio Negro massacre: \$800
- Commemoration, May 14, 1982, World Bank/IDB's Chixoy Dam/Los Encuentros massacre: \$1,045

### Emergency responses

- Maria Cuc, illegally detained and "criminalized" for Chaabil Choch community land recuperation: \$10,545
- Chaabil Choch community land recuperation: \$1,927

- German Chub, health support, victim of Hudbay-linked shooting: \$1,620
- Refugee support, Jose Ich: \$4,093.31
- Family support, Eduardo Bin Pop, death of child: \$355
- Family security, Choc/Ich family, purchase property: \$11,440
- Family support, killing of Eduardo Quevedo: \$880

### Education

- Rio Negro/Pacux refugee community – primary school, scholarships for children of genocide victims: \$6,600
- San Miguel Ixtahuacan, scholarship, law degree for Mam woman resisting Goldcorp mining harms: \$1,595
- El Estor, scholarships, children of Q'eqchi' people seeking justice for mining harms: \$7,827.80
- Santa Maria Tzeja, primary and middle schools, scholarships to high school and university: \$7,135

## HONDURAS

- Azacualpa community resisting harms, violations, cemetery destruction caused by Aura Minerals company: \$3,445
- Siria Valley Environmental Committee, denouncing health harms from Goldcorp Inc.'s mine (2000-2009); resisting plan to build geothermal energy plant in communities harmed by mining: \$1,490
- Berta Caceres family, demanding justice for her assassination: \$3,287
- Family security, victim/eye-witness in Berta Caceres assassination: \$3,000
- Commemoration, March 3, 2016, assassination of Berta Caceres: \$1,845
- Honduras Solidarity Network, support for families of victims of killings and political prisoners, after fraudulent elections of November 2017: \$1,600
- COFADEH (Comite de Familiares de los Desaparecidos y Detenidos), support for victims of killings and human rights violations, after fraudulent elections of November 2017: \$2,545
- ASOPDEHU (Asociación por la Democracia y los Derechos Humanos), support for victims of killings and human rights violations, after fraudulent elections of November 2017: \$2,045

- Simcoe County Honduras Political Prisoners Project: \$4,500
- Refugee support, Felix & Benjamin, in Canada: \$2,450

## **NORTH-SOUTH HUMAN RIGHTS ACCOMPANIMENT, REPORTING & ACTIVISM**

- Reporting on November 2017 electoral fraud and repression in Honduras: \$1,500
- Berta Caceres, 2nd anniversary assassination, accompaniment: \$2,317
- Edwin Espinal, political prisoner, accompaniment: \$926
- Doc-film, health harms in Siria Valley linked to Goldcorp mine: \$400
- Doc-film, illegal detention and “criminalization” of Maria Cuc: \$400
- Doc-film: political prisoners in Honduras: \$1,736
- Mining Injustice Solidarity Network: Education and activism related to Canadian mining repression and harms: \$1,000
- Education presentations, Canada/U.S.: \$500

- ‘Experiential learning’ delegation to Guatemala, UNBC-RA: \$9,759.22
- Political prisoners delegation to Honduras, Simcoe County-RA: \$3,946.28
- Human rights delegation to Guatemala, RA-Mir Centre: \$7,744.09
- Film-crew to Guatemala, justice for Highbay-linked nickel mining harms: \$2,252.48

## **OTHER COUNTRIES**

- Tropico Seco (Peru), disaster and flood rebuilding: \$5,000
- AYNI (Peru), community development: \$11,550
- COMPPA (Chiapas), community radio and communication: \$7,580

*Thank-you for your trust and support*

Grahame Russell, *director Rights Action (Canada & U.S.)*  
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