

# Rights Action

info@rightsaction.org • www.rightsaction.org • www.facebook/RightsAction.org • Twitter.com/RightsAction

December 2020

## The normalcy of "eternal emergencies" in Guatemala and Honduras

*"We live in a country of eternal emergencies. We have no time for anything else. U.S. and Canadian supported coup d'etats. Pandemics. Hurricanes and tropical storms. Rapacious, murderous and corrupt governments backed by the U.S., Canada and transnational companies.  
We need to construct another society and State."*

Miriam Miranda is a courageous Garifuna land, rights and environmental defender and Coordinator of OFRANEH in Honduras. Miriam's comment can equally be said about Guatemala.

There is no sugar-coating 2020. It has been a hard and sad year - quite depressing at times. As COVID-19 spread across the planet, its impact has been particularly hard on humans living in pre-existing conditions of vulnerabilities: systemic economic exploitation and poverty, discriminations, human rights violations, repression and violent dispossessions.

It has been a very hard year in Honduras and Guatemala for our Indigenous and non-Indigenous partner groups whose land, human rights and environmental defense struggles Rights Action has supported and been involved with for many years.

### Remembering & Honoring Elena Choc Quib Caal

In the midst of added suffering caused by COVID-19 and hurricanes ETA and IOTA, we remember and honor Elena Choc Quib Caal, a courageous Maya Q'eqchi' woman who died of preventable cervical cancer on October 18, 2020.

In 2007, Elena –and 10 other Maya Q'eqchi' women– were gang raped by mining company security guards and Guatemalan soldiers and police carrying out the illegal, violent eviction of their home village of Lote 8. The evictions were carried out to advance the mining interests of Canadian company Skye Resources (later amalgamated with Hudbay Minerals). It is quite possible Elena's cervical cancer resulted from the rapes she suffered in 2007. Due to Guatemala's endemic racism and corruption,



Elena speaks with her Canadian lawyer Murray Klippenstein during a break in her November 2017 deposition (examination for discovery) by Hudbay Mineral's lawyers.

(continued)

#### 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  
Toronto ON  
M5A 1T8

**UNITED STATES**  
Rights Action  
Box 50887  
Washington, DC  
20091-0887

**CREDIT CARD DONATIONS**  
In Canada and U.S.  
[www.rightsaction.org/donate/](http://www.rightsaction.org/donate/)

**DONATIONS OF STOCK**  
Contact [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)



### BOARD Canada & U.S.

James MacDonald  
Wayne Rosen  
Grahame Russell  
Merran Smith  
Paul Magno  
Freddie Schrider

### FULL-TIME STAFF

Grahame Russell

### PART-TIME

Matthew Simpson  
Scott Wright  
Camila Rich

### GET INFORMED/ GET INVOLVED

**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

### Daily News:

- [www.democracynow.org](http://www.democracynow.org)
- [www.rabble.ca](http://www.rabble.ca)
- [www.thecanadafiles.com](http://www.thecanadafiles.com)

### Subscribe to Email

#### Newsblasts:

<https://rightsaction.org/subscribe>

**FB:** [www.facebook.com/RightsAction.org](http://www.facebook.com/RightsAction.org)

**Tw:** @RightsAction

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

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

and due to the increased poverty and dispossession she suffered after the 2007 evictions and rapes, Elena never received even minimal medical attention for her cancer, until it was too late.



Rights Action spent most of 2020 sending emergency funds to our partner groups struggling to survive during months of the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by Hurricanes ETA and IOTA. At the same time we continued also to support their multi-generational human rights, land and environmental defense struggles - courageous work resisting the “eternal emergencies” of violent and corrupt incursions of government and military-backed companies and investors operating in many sectors of the global economy: mining and dams; for-export consumables (African plan, sugar cane, bananas, coffee, cattle); tourism; sweatshop garment factories.

The majority populations of Honduras and Guatemala continue to live and subsist under the systemic oppression, violence and exploitation of their own military and economic elites, and governments, in direct partnership with the U.S. and Canadian governments and transnational companies and investors.

## “Constructing other societies and States” in the U.S. and Canada

Parallel to the struggles of our partner groups “to construct another society and State” in Honduras and Guatemala, Rights Action continued education, political and legal activism work in Canada and the U.S. aimed at “constructing other societies and States” here at home. It remains our urgent challenge and responsibility to transform the U.S. and Canada into countries that don’t economically exploit, and politically and militarily dominate and abuse weaker ‘global south’ countries - like Honduras and Guatemala.

Thank you to many folks and organizations who continue to support our work. Your comments and questions are welcome.

Grahame Russell, director, [grahame@rightsaction.org](mailto:grahame@rightsaction.org)



## Your funds at work in 2020: Summary

Almost every community group and person Rights Action supports is involved in courageous human rights, environmental, territorial defense struggles, confronting the wealth and (oftentimes) violent power of companies and investors in the unequal, unjust global economy in the unjust, unequal Nation State system.

When the COVID-19 pandemic spread through the region, and in November 2020, when hurricanes ETA and IOTA devastated many regions, it is to these very same community groups that Rights Action sent emergency response funds.

As is true with most emergency situations and catastrophes, local communities and organizations are in the best position to receive support and provide the most effective hands-on emergency relief.

### COVID-19: \$75,000

Since mid-March, Rights Action sent \$75,000 in small grants (\$250-\$2000) to partner groups in Honduras and Guatemala responding to Covid19. Funds were used primarily for:

- Buying basic foods and securing water for the most needy community members
- Covid19 education and prevention measures
- Planting community and family gardens, with focus on medicinal plants and local foods

### Hurricanes ETA and IOTA: \$50,000

Over the first two weeks of November 2020, Rights Action sent \$50,000 in small grants (\$250-\$2000) to partner groups in north and central Honduras and eastern Guatemala responding to the devastation of hurricanes ETA and IOTA, that worsened ever more so the widespread homelessness, hunger and desperation. Community groups used funds primarily for food and potable water, clothing and shelter, and medical support for victims of the hurricanes... before the inevitable rebuilding work began, once again.

***“We are NOT all in this together  
We should NOT be working to  
get back to normal.”***

Rights Action is deeply concerned by the ‘now even more’ precarious conditions of a majority of the populations of Honduras and Guatemala whose military-backed governments maintain full relations with the U.S. and Canadian governments, World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank and IMF, and global companies and investors operating mines and hydro-electric dams, ‘sweatshop’ factories and tourism businesses, and producing ‘for-export’ coffee, sugarcane, African palm, bananas and pineapples.

During the worst ravages of COVID-19 and hurricanes ETA and IOTA, these sectors of the global economy continued with ‘business as usual’, producing and exporting goods to wealthy consuming societies, primarily in the U.S., Canada and western Europe.

These same corrupt, military-backed regimes – deceitfully referred to as “democratic allies” by the U.S. and Canada - do next to nothing to invest in and support their majority populations in times of the “normal” pandemics of impoverishment and racism, land dispossession, human rights violations and repression, let alone when

further devastated by Covid19, and climate disasters like hurricanes ETA and IOTA.

### Land, human rights and environmental defense struggles: \$150,000

In 2020, our community defender partner groups not only struggled to survive COVID-19 and hurricanes ETA and IOTA, but were forced to continue with land, human rights and environmental struggles in resistance to rapacious, violent economic actors. Rights Action was able to send \$150,000 to Indigenous and non-Indigenous community defenders for a range of their community defense struggles.

### GUATEMALA

- CODIDENA. Resisting harmful, illegal mining operation of Pan American Silver (formerly Tahoe Resource)
- Union of Maya Q’eqchi’ fisher people. Resisting harmful, illegal mining operation of Solway Investment Group
- Criminal trial against Mynor Padilla, former Hubday Minerals/Skye Resources head of security
- Landmark Hubday Minerals lawsuits in Canada
- Legal defense work: Supporting political prisoners and victims of trumped up ‘criminalizations’
- Rights Action accompaniment, education, activism trips
- Angelica Choc. Widow of Hubday-linked murder victim, leader in justice struggles in Guatemala and Canada
- Aniceto Lopez. Health support, community defender against previous Goldcorp mining harms
- Carlitos Chen. Child of Maya Achi genocide survivor, physical and mental health support
- Carlos Ernesto Choc. Family support, journalist targeted for reporting on mining harms linked to Solway Investment Group
- German Chub. Health support, paralysis victim of Hubday-linked shooting
- Jesus Tecu. Health support, surviving victim of Maya Achi genocide
- Ramiro Choc. Health support, Maya Q’eqchi’ land defender, former political prisoner
- Ramiro, Angelica and Maria Choc. Support during ‘state of siege’ crackdown on Q’eqchi’ land defenders

*(continued)*

## EDUCATION

- El Estor. Scholarships, children of Maya Q'eqchi' community defenders
- Rio Negro/Pacux refugee community. Education funding, children of Maya Achi genocide victims
- San Miguel Ixtahuacan. Law studies, Maya Mam community defender

## TRUTH, MEMORY, JUSTICE

- Commemoration. Feb.2, 1982 World Bank/IDB's Chixoy dam Xococ massacre
- Commemoration. Mar.13, 1982 World Bank/IDB's Chixoy dam Rio Negro massacre
- Commemoration. Jan.8, 1982 Chichupac massacre
- Commemoration. Mar.31, 2018 murder of Hector Choc, nephew of Angelica Choc
- Commemoration. Sept.27, 2009 assassination of Adolfo Ich, husband of Angelica Choc
- FAFG (Guatemalan Foundation of Forensic Anthropology), mass grave exhumations, search for the 'disappeared'

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- Transitions. Wheelchair building, personal health management support for paralysis victims

## HONDURAS

- Azacualpa Environmental Committee. Resisting illegal cemetery and community destruction by Aura Minerals
- Berta Caceres family. Security and justice for Berta's assassination
- Commemoration. March 2, 2016, assassination of Berta Caceres
- CIPPH. Indigenous community defense struggle
- Repression victims and political prisoners. Support for family members, activists, lawyers
- OFRANEH (Garifuna & Afro-descendant people's organization). Resisting harms and violations caused by global tourism operators, African palm producers
- Refugee support. Victims of repression, granted asylum in Canada
- Right Action accompaniment, education and activism trips

## OTHER COUNTRIES

- Chiapas, Mexico. Health support, Gustavo Castro, victim of attempted killing during assassination of Berta Caceres
- Chiapas, Mexico. Human rights award, commemorating assassination of Mariano Abarca
- El Salvador. Human rights assembly commemorating Oct.27, 1987 assassination of Herbert Anaya Sanabria



Washington, DC 20091-0887  
Box 50887

**Right's Action**