

URGENT ACTION

THREE LAND DEFENDERS KILLED, OTHERS AT RISK

Luis Marroquin, José Can Xol and Mateo Chamám Paau, three land and territory defenders from different communities in Guatemala were killed in less than a week. Guatemalan authorities must take action to fully investigate these crimes and ensure that other defenders can carry out their work without fear for their safety.

In the morning of 9 May, unknown assailants fatally shot **Luis Arturo Marroquin**, 47, several times in the back in San Luis Jilotepeque, in the Central East part of Guatemala. Luis Marroquin was a member of the national coordination of the Committee for Campesino Development (Comité de Desarrollo Campesino, CODECA). He had arrived the same morning by bus from Jalapa to attend a municipal assembly in San Luis Jilotepeque. According to witnesses, he was being followed. This incident took place a week after President Jimmy Morales referred to CODECA in a disrespectful way in a public speech on 2 May and discredited their activities.

In the morning of 10 May, **José Can Xol**, 37, was fatally shot while trying to help members of the community of Choctún Basilá, in the municipality of Cobán in northern Guatemala, who were being attacked by several unidentified armed men. José Can Xol was a member of the Campesino Committee of the Highlands (Comité Campesino del Altiplano, CCDA) and was involved in protecting and defending the community in a long-standing land tenure conflict.

During the night of 13 May, CCDA member **Mateo Chamám Paau**, 31, was found dead in the community of San Juan Tres Ríos, in the municipality of Cobán. Members of the community went out to search for him after his family noticed he had been missing for hours. He had reported receiving threats and an arrest warrant had been issued against him in 2015, in the context of the land tenure conflict between the community and alleged owners of the land. Other members of CCDA and CODECA remain at risk.

1) TAKE ACTION

Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:

- Calling on the authorities to initiate a prompt, impartial and thorough investigation into the murders of Luis Marroquin, Jose Can Xol and Mateo Chamám Paau, to identify both the material and intellectual perpetrators and bring those responsible to justice. The investigation should include the theory of the assassination being a possible retaliation for their legitimate activities as human rights defenders;
- Calling on them to condemn the assassinations, to publicly recognize the important and legitimate work of human rights defenders in Guatemala and refrain from using language that stigmatizes, abuses, disparages or discriminates against them;
- Urging them to advance in the adoption of a Public Policy to Protect Defenders in accordance with the minimum criteria set out by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the case *Human Rights Defender v. Guatemala*.

Contact these two officials by 25 June, 2018:

Attorney General

Thelma Aldana

Fiscal General de la República

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Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Email: taldana@mp.gob.gt

Twitter: [@MPguatemala](https://twitter.com/MPguatemala)

Salutation: Dear Attorney General

Ambassador Manuel Espina, Embassy of Guatemala

2220 R St. NW,

Washington, DC 20008

Phone: 202.745.4952

Fax: 202.745.1908

Email: info@guatemala-embassy.org

Contact Form: <https://goo.gl/CeAmWn>

Salutation: Dear Ambassador

2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

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INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Human rights defenders in Guatemala carry out their activities in an extremely hostile environment, particularly those working on rights related to land, territory and the environment. They face continuous threats, intimidation, attacks, smear campaigns and stigmatization. According to the Guatemalan NGO, Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Guatemala (UDEFEGUA), nine defenders have been killed since the beginning of 2018. In 2017, UDEFEGUA registered 483 attacks against human rights defenders.

CCDA is a campesino (peasant farmer) organization founded in 1982 that works to promote access to land as well as the labour rights of Mayan campesinos. CCDA has reported already been targeted with attacks and intimidations. Several attacks against their office and against leaders were registered in June 2017. In June 2016, Indigenous leader Daniel Choc Pop was killed in San Juan Tres Ríos.

CODECA was founded in 1992 to work on improving the situation of the rural poor in Guatemala, focusing on issues such as wage conditions for farmers, land reform and nationalization of electric energy in the country. CODECA members have reported being targeted with attacks, threats and intimidations.

In 2014, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ordered Guatemala to adopt and implement a comprehensive public policy for the protection of human rights defenders in the judgement *Human Rights Defender vs Guatemala*. Despite some progress, the process to create the public policy hasn't concluded yet.

Impunity remains the rule in most cases of threats and attacks against Guatemalan defenders. The justice system is also regularly misused to criminalize human rights defenders, in an attempt to break up movements and organizations, wearing down the defenders and removing them from the public arena. For more information, see the Amnesty International report *"We are defending the land with our blood": Defenders of the land, territory and environment in Honduras and Guatemala* (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr01/4562/2016/en/>) and *Americas: State Protection Mechanisms for Human Rights Defenders* (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr01/6211/2017/en/>).

Name: Luis Marroquin (m), Jose Can Xol (m), Mateo Chamám Paau (m) and other members of the Committee for Campesino Development (Comité de Desarrollo Campesino, CODECA) and the Campesino Committee of the Highlands (Comité Campesino del Altiplano, CCDA).
Gender m/f: all

UA: 97/18 Index: AMR 34/8417/2018 Issue Date: 14 May 2018