



Consuelo Porras - Stop criminalizing people who are defending their territories and natural resources!

As the trial for renowned Maya Q'eqchi land defender Abelino Chub wraps up, more than 500 people demand justice and his freedom.

April 24, 2019

Washington, DC

More than 500 people from 27 countries and indigenous nations have sent a petition to Guatemalan Attorney General Dr. Maria Consuelo Porras calling for the immediate release of Abelino Chub Caal, Maya Q'eqchi land defender who has been arbitrarily detained for more than 2 years. The full text of the petition can be found at bit.ly/AbelinoIsInnocent.

On Earth Day - April 22 - Abelino's trial finally opened in a high-risk court in Guatemala City. Accused of arson, land occupation and criminal conspiracy, he is facing 22 years in prison simply for doing his work as a community worker and technician with the Guillermo Toriello Foundation, accompanying and translating for indigenous communities that are working to have their historic land title legally recognized.

Abelino was arrested on February 4, 2017, while celebrating his birthday with his wife and two young children. When he asked why the police were taking him, they responded, "Because you are an indigenous leader." The malicious charges against Abelino were filed by State Prosecutors and private agribusiness companies called Inversiones Cobra and CXI wanting to use indigenous land for banana and palm oil production. On the second day of the trial, Abelino declared on the stand that the manager of one of the companies tried to bribe him with a truck, family vacation and an apartment in Guatemala City if he would convince the indigenous community of Plan Grande to evacuate their homelands. Abelino

refused, noting that even if he tried, the Maya Q'eqchi community would never abandon their territory.

Abelino Chub has worked for more than 10 years supporting some of the most vulnerable and impoverished communities in Guatemala. Over decades, ancestral Maya Q'eqchi territories have been grabbed for banana, palm oil, sugar production as well as for the development of large scale nickel mining and hydroelectric projects on rivers sacred to the Q'eqchi people. The same companies accusing Abelino have also pushed for corrupt local judges to order the forcible eviction of communities, often leading to devastation when homes and crops are burnt to the ground, and extreme violence is used, including rape and murder.

With no accountability or justice, and nowhere else to live, many Maya Q'eqchies are forced to make the dangerous journey to migrate to the USA. The devastating death in December 2018 of 7-year-old Jakelin Caal while in US border custody, brought home the desperation that Maya Q'eqchi families, like hers, are facing.

Instead of addressing the root causes of migration, and the Guatemalan genocide - land reform - big business, with the corrupt Guatemalan state behind them, is trying to punish indigenous defenders like Abelino Chub and terrorize others from speaking out against the injustice they face in their communities. Guatemalan human rights organizations and lawyers note that the State has issued more than 900 arrest warrants for indigenous Maya Q'eqchi farmers and those who courageously denounce the aggression they face.

Wednesday, April 24 is the last day of Abelino Chub's trial. With no evidence against him, he is expected to be found innocent and immediately released. The Public Prosecutor must investigate and prosecute judicial wrongdoing that led to his 26 months of arbitrary detention and immediately end the prosecution of hundreds of indigenous land rights defenders.

Follow along at Facebook/AbelinoChub and Twitter @libertadabelino

Follow the hashtags #LibertadAbelino and #AbelinoInocente

Listen live at <http://paraqueseconozca.blogspot.com/>

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More than 500 people from 27 countries and indigenous nations signed the petition to Attorney General Consuelo Porras. This is what they had to say!

“This monstrous injustice has been going on for years. We need to wake up and defend the rights of indigenous people to their own lands.”

“Indigenous people are under attack around the world by mining companies, agribusiness and the governments that support them. International solidarity gives them a chance for their communities to survive this attack. Free Abelino Chub Caal!!”

“I know Abelino and his work. He is innocent. Free him now! And stop criminalizing people who are defending people, their rights and natural resources.”