

El Estor, Izabal 28 March 2024

To: Michel Forst, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders under the Aarhus Convention.

Dear Michel Forst, receive cordial greetings from these ancestral Maya Q'eqchi' lands of Guatemala, Central America. Many successes in your important work as Special Rapporteur of the United Nations.

I hereby thank you very much for the space to listen to me and take into account my case of criminalization, by false accusations of 4 mining workers of Russian nationality, in August 2017, of the mining company CGN - Pronico of Solway Investment Group, in the municipality of El Estor, Izabal. A criminal prosecution that lasted 7 years unjustly and ended on January 31, 2024.

January 31, 2024 was an important day for environmental investigative journalism in the country of Guatemala, finally the judge [REDACTED] lifted all charges against me as well as three environmental defenders who are engaged in artisanal fishing municipality of El Estor, Izabal and who were part of an injunction in the high courts of the country, for the contamination of Lake Izabal in March 2017, caused by the same mining company which wanted to hide the environmental damage, before the entire international community.

The Maya Q'eqchi' population living in the mining area and without being consulted, continue to defend natural resources such as water and against deforestation by open-pit mining activity. We ask that you continue to listen and follow up on the petitions and concerns of all the indigenous families of this place, on this environmental issue, since threats and intimidation persist against this journalistic work of environmental investigation and human rights defenders.

Sincerely: Carlos Ernesto Choc, Maya Q'eqchi' journalist.

