

# **Demand the release of unjustly detained Guatemalan prisoners**

Saturday 24 November 2012, by [FoE](#) (Date first published: 22 November 2012).

**Join Friends of the Earth International in calling for the release of nine political prisoners in Barillas, Guatemala, who are due before a hearing on November 26.**

**Click here to send a mail to the Guatemalan authorities:**

<http://action.foei.org/page/speakout/demand-the-immediate-release-of-the-prisoners-in-barillas?js=false>

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Eleven people were arrested without charge on May 2, 2012 in a flagrant violation of their rights. Several of those arrested had protested the killing of a community member by private security guards working for Spanish company Hidralia SA. Others were simply randomly picked up.

Hidralia SA is building the Santa Cruz hydroelectric dam. Over 90% of local community members are opposed to and voted against the implementation of hydroelectric and mining projects in Barillas in a 2007 consultation.

Eight people remain in prison over seven months after the arrests, as verified by Friends of the Earth International's Solidarity Mission in November this year.

The prisoners are also concerned for the wellbeing of their wives and children who have been deprived of their main household income. Many struggle with heavy debt burdens. The bus journey from their home communities to the prison takes twelve hours, making it difficult for families to visit.

The prisoners have been labeled as terrorists, despite the fact that they were either peacefully defending their communities or not involved at all.

Three of the prisoners have since been released.

The arbitrary nature of the detention of the political prisoners of Barillas cannot be denied nor concealed, it appears in the reports of several human rights groups, as well as in the file of the case and in the legal actions brought by the lawyers of the detainees.

You can support the prisoners of Barillas by sending a letter to the Guatemalan authorities and the Spanish Embassy. This action will only succeed with the solidarity of a large number of supporters, so spread the word by sharing this action on facebook, twitter and by email.

**Take action now!**

For more information on this case

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## Letter

I hereby support the joint demand made by thousands of organizations and individuals from all over the world who have endorsed the call for the release of the political prisoners who were arbitrarily arrested in Barillas in May of 2012.

We await for the hearing that will take place on November 26 in Santa Eulalia, Huehutenango, where we hope the authorities will end the injustice and release the political prisoners of Barillas. The arbitrary detention of the political prisoners of Barillas cannot be denied nor concealed, it appears in the reports of several human rights groups, as well as in the file of the case and in the legal actions brought by the lawyers of the detainees.

One of the reasons for concern is the Guatemalan government's attitude of putting the interests of transnational corporations - in this case of Spanish corporation Ecoener - Hidralia Energía, in charge of Hydro Santa Cruz project - above the people's interests, by leaving Guatemalan citizens unprotected. They do not even enjoy the minimum guarantees of the rule of law.

We hereby call on the Guatemalan government to stop the impunity of corporations like the aforementioned, which use manipulation, libel, harassment and intimidation to impose their projects that answer to private economic interests in territories where the peoples have expressed their absolute opposition to them in community consultations.

We are deeply concerned and we reject the policy of repression and criminalization of the social protest in Guatemala, as well as the re-militarization that is taking place in indigenous territories. An example of this is the unfair imprisonment of the political prisoners of Barillas, but also the recent massacre in Totonicapán by government security forces in October.

We also express our sincere support to the peoples, organizations, groups and individuals committed to the struggle in defense of human and indigenous rights to build a just and peaceful society. For this reason we are closely watching the trial against the political prisoners of Barillas.

Upon all the above, the peoples, organizations, groups and individuals who defend human and collective rights, hereby demand:

That the Guatemalan government take action to stop intimidation and arbitrary arrests.

That the Guatemalan government curtail the negative actions of transnational corporations, such as "Ecoener - Hidralia Energia" or any other private corporations, in complicity with government institutions that are trying to stop peaceful popular resistance to their destructive projects.

An investigation of the people who have wrongfully used the law to benefit private interests, instead of the communities.

That an investigation is started and a legal procedure is filed against the real authors of the crimes and illegal actions benefiting transnational corporations - including public servants of the Guatemalan State - for their human rights violations, threats, intimidation against men and women that peacefully oppose private projects, whose only crime was to defend their human rights, their

right to life and the collective rights of their peoples.

To put an end to the injustice through the immediate release of the political prisoners of Barillas: Diego Juan Sebastián, Andrés León Andrés Juan, Joel Gaspar Mateo, Ventura Juan, Antonio Rogelio Velásquez López, Saúl Aurelio Méndez Muñoz, Amado Pedro Miguel, and Pedro Nuñez.

To provide compensation for the civil and moral damage caused both to the prisoners and to their families.

“WE ARE ALL BARILLAS”

*To sign:*

<http://action.foei.org/page/speakout/demand-the-immediate-release-of-the-prisoners-in-barillas?js=faalse>

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