

Free Guatemalan human rights defender Rubén Herrera!

Wednesday 29 May 2013, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 28 May 2012).

Rubén Herrera was arrested as he left his house in Huehuetenango district, Guatemala on March 15 this year. He is still in prison more than two months later.

Rubén has been an active community organiser, working on many environmental and social justice campaigns and bringing together networks and organisations committed to social good for most of his adult life.

The flimsy reasons for his arrest – including incitement and kidnapping – were decisively refuted during a hearing on March 19. However, despite requests by Guatemala's Public Prosecutor to dismiss the case due to a lack of evidence, the judge ordered that the case continue. Rubén is due to return to court on May 30.

Rubén's unjust detention is part of a deeply disturbing cycle of criminalization of human rights and environmental activists in his part of Guatemala (Barillas, Huehuetenango). Spanish company Hidralia SA is building a hydroelectric dam in the area, despite 90% of local community members having voted against the implementation of hydroelectric and mining projects in a community consultation. Local communities have repeatedly implicated the company in political repression, intimidation and manipulation of local and national legal processes in recent years. Rubén has been involved in efforts to demand that the company pull out of the area.

Join us in demanding that the Guatemalan authorities release Rubén Herrera immediately and take all necessary steps to end the criminalization of human rights and environmental activists.

Take action now! Go to:

<http://action.foei.org/page/speakout/rub-n-herrera-?js=false>

Letter:

I am writing to demand the immediate release of human and environmental rights defender Rubén Herrera and to insist that Guatemalan and Spanish authorities take all available steps to prevent further political repression of human rights and environmental activists in Guatemala.

The charges (cases 176/2011 and 65/2012) against Rubén Herrera have already been dismissed by the Guatemalan public prosecutor. I hope the Guatemalan authorities will end this injustice and release Rubén Herrera immediately.

Furthermore, I am deeply concerned that Rubén's detention is part of an ongoing pattern of repression and criminalization of social protest in Guatemala. The Guatemalan government has

repeatedly put the interests of transnational corporations above the public interest, leaving Guatemalan citizens unprotected from arbitrary harassment. I hereby call on the relevant Guatemalan and Spanish authorities to stop corporate impunity. Hidralia SA has been accused of using manipulation, libel, harassment and intimidation to impose its projects on communities who have repeatedly and consistently voiced their opposition to their operations.

I also express my sincere support to the peoples, organizations, groups and individuals who are committed to the struggle to defend human and environmental rights to build a just and peaceful society.

I hereby demand:

- the immediate and unconditional release of Rubén Herrera
- that the Guatemalan authorities take action to stop intimidation and arbitrary arrests of human rights and environmental activists
- that the Guatemalan and Spanish authorities curtail the negative and illegal actions of transnational corporations and do more to promote respect for human rights

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