



TIKONELAAB' MOLAAJ AJ UK'U'X IXIMULEW

Comité Campesino Del Altiplano

Col. Santa Cruz Quixayá, San Lucas Tolimán, Sololá
Guatemala, C.A.



Hurricane Julia and the Criminalisation of Guatemala's Mayan and Campesino Communities – Context and Impacts



The economy of the country's indigenous and farming families has not yet recovered from the devastation caused by the tropical storms ETA and IOTA in November 2020, where there were loss of life, thousands of victims, millions of dollars in crop losses, and as always, the unwillingness of the government to address the emergencies generated by natural phenomena.

More States of Disaster were declared by the government than there was assistance provided to the affected families. Once again, the people in solidarity left on their own to resist and adopt whatever limited means they had to assist their affected brothers and sisters.

OCTOBER 2022's TROPICAL STORM JULIA EXPOSED THE GREAT VULNERABILITY of Guatemala's Rural Regions. From the moment it was determined that Hurricane Julia was going to touch down on Guatemalan soil, albeit as a tropical storm, hundreds of vulnerable families rushed to seek shelter to avoid its worst effects. Julia's impacts and destruction were indeed horrifying. The tropical storm showed no mercy to the most vulnerable families, already suffering under dire conditions of poverty, and of extreme poverty.

Julia's rampage through the departments of Izabal, Alta Verapaz, Quiché and Baja Verapaz, which were the most affected, left 14 people dead due to landslides. In addition, collapsed bridges cut off families and the flooding of rivers affected more than 400,000 people. The flood waters caused property damage to countless houses and millions of dollars in losses in corn, beans, cardamom and vegetable crops. Many families have not yet returned to their homes because they lost everything.





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AFTER THE TROPICAL STORM, A TORRENT OF DISEASES

In the wake of Tropical Storm Julia in Guatemala, the number of people affected continues to climb. Children have been suffering from health problems due to the lack of access to drinking water in their communities, in some cases caused by the deterioration of the pipes that carry their water; in many other cases due to the lack of any access their families have to water at all.

The Government of Guatemala's failure to provide health care, water and food to the Mayan families and the campesino population is setting off emergency alarms in all of the zones affected. CCDA has taken upon itself what should have been the government's responsibility to help the families so that they may survive the horrifying destruction caused by Tropical Storm Julia and its aftermath.

All this is aggravated even more by the limited physical access to the affected communities given how complicated it is to reach them by land in order to assist them with food, clothing, water, cleaning supplies and medicine, among other necessities of life.

It is necessary to join forces to prioritise the families who need a supporting hand to be able to move forward, despite the loss of loved ones, of their crops and/or of their home that cost them so much to build.



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The Terror of Repression at the Hands of Their Own Government

Guatemala continues to live through one of its most troubling times, especially people in rural areas, due to the high rate of criminalisation, persecution and lawfare (staged, illegitimate prosecution) against indigenous and campesino communities where ruling elites are trying to dispossess them and uproot them from their territories.

Hydroelectric, mining, oil, cement and agrofuel projects are located mainly in indigenous and peasant areas. These projects cause concentration and reconcentration of land in fewer and fewer hands and result in the dispossession of



The United Nations Rapporteur Victoria Taul-Corpuz recommended to the Government of Guatemala that it ensure **"the development of a legal framework and an effective system for the recognition and protection of the ancestral rights of indigenous peoples to the possession, use, development and control of their lands, in line with its international obligations in this area"**.



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The concentration and re-concentration of land in fewer and fewer hands leaves campesinos and campesinas without access to land or possibility of historical repossession of this land, the very essence of their lives. They are being dispossessed and made destitute by heavily armed groups that are leaving campesinos and campesinas without a means of living. This dispossession (theft) is cruelly felt given that their ancestral land base has been taken away by force.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE LAND DISPOSSESSION OF CAMPEVINOS AND CAMPEVINAS



In 2022 alone, communities such as Las Pilas Sellamch, Jobente, in Santa María Cahabón, San Juan Los Tres Rios, Cobán, Alta Verapaz, La Esperanza, Santa Rosa and the indigenous community of Pomarrosal in Quiché have been extrajudicially and illegitimately evicted by armed men who have dispossessed them of their lands, leaving more than 250 families without homes and no response from the Guatemalan government.

The Comité Campesino del Altiplano's (CCDA) communities and members alone have suffered 5 extrajudicial collective evictions from their organized bases, more than 1,024 arrest warrants of which 33% involve women, 12 assassinations of their leaders since 2018, and the unjust imprisonment of 7 compañeros and compañeras for simply defending their territory.

Agrarian Justice Is Urgent for the Autonomy of Our Peoples

