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Guatemala: Armed attacks against the Peaceful Resistance of Ixquisis Microregion and community members

On 9 October 2018, members of **Peaceful Resistance of Ixquisis Microregion** movement and other members of the Ixquisis Microregion, San Mateo Ixtatán, Huehuetenango, in Guatemala were attacked with gun shots and tear gas by around 300 heavily armed anti-riot agents of the *Policía Nacional Civil* (PNC). The group was attacked during a peaceful demonstration to defend their human rights which are being threatened by the activities of the hydroelectric company *Energía y Renovación*, formerly known as *PDH S.A.* The attack left at least six people injured. On 12 October 2018, a number of attacks involving different actors took place in the Ixquisis Microregion: one member of the Peaceful Resistance was left injured.

The Ixquisis Microregion is home to [La Resistencia Pacífica de la Microregión de Ixquisis](#) (the Peaceful Resistance of Ixquisis Microregion), one of the five global recipients of the [2018 Front Line Defenders Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk](#), in recognition of their dangerous struggle for land rights and environmental justice. The Peaceful Resistance is an organisation formed by indigenous communities in response to human rights violations committed in the name of economic development in [Guatemala](#) by mining and hydroelectric mega-projects in their region. Human rights defenders in the Peaceful Resistance risk their lives to defend the right to self-determination, access to land, water and freedom of expression and movement.

On 9 October 2018, protesters suffered an attack from 300 heavily armed anti-riot agents of the PNC, which was reported in the [media](#). They were shot at and had tear gas bombs thrown at them, leaving at least six members injured. On 12 October 2018, approximately at 8:00 p.m., 30-year-old Alfonso Miguel Juan, member of the Peaceful Resistance, was attacked nearby the community El Pojom with a firearm by Baltazar Nicolás Gaspar, a former policeman. He suffered a severe injury on his throat and had to receive medical treatment.

These attacks are part of a series of repressive actions taken against the Peaceful Resistance movement and community members by the national police force and private security companies. In 2017 alone, there were more than 75 reported attacks against members of the Peaceful Resistance and in 2018 they were subject to several attacks including threats and excessive use of force against protesters, as well as smear campaigns and criminalisation attempts aimed at dividing the population and weakening social support to the demonstrations.

Front Line Defenders condemns the police violence and threats suffered by the Peaceful Resistance and the members of the community they represent during the peaceful demonstrations in Ixquisis microregion. Front Line Defenders is concerned that such attacks and smear campaigns may further lead to an increase in violence against the movement and human rights defenders in Guatemala in general.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Guatemala to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the police violence, threats, acts of intimidation and smear campaigns against peaceful protesters in Ixquisis, San Mateo Ixtatán, Huehuetenango, and members of the Peaceful Resistance of Ixquisis Microregion, with a view to

publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;

2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of the members the Peaceful Resistance of Ixquisis Microregion and residents of Ixquisis, San Mateo Ixtatán, Huehuetenango, in consultation with them;

3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Guatemala are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including their right to peaceful protest.

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