

Angelica Choc's Statement

My name is Angelica Choc, and I am indigenous Mayan Q'eqchi' from the community of La Unión, in the Municipality of El Estor, Republic of Guatemala.

Just over a year ago, my husband, Adolfo Ich Chamán, was killed by security forces employed at the Fenix mining project in Guatemala – a mining project owned by Canadian company HudBay Minerals. In the afternoon of September 27, 2009, I watched my husband leave our house for the last time. I later learned that mine security forces had surrounded my husband, dragged him through a gap in a fence and hacked at him with machetes. Then the mine's chief of security shot him in the neck at close range. This attack was unprovoked.

My husband was a teacher, a community leader and a defender of indigenous Q'eqchi' land rights. I believe he was killed because he spoke out about the rights violations caused by Canadian mining in Guatemala. I believe he was killed because he was encouraging communities to stay united against the harmful practices of the mining company.

It is very painful to remember such shocking tragedy. The days since my husband was killed have been very hard. There has been no justice. The man who killed Adolfo remains free. And the mining company has not been held accountable. My five children have lost a father; I have lost my husband; and our community has lost a leader. We need justice for these losses.

If my husband were here today, I know what he would say. He would say the same things he has been saying for years. He would say that our Q'eqchi' communities are part of an ancient people. That we retain our own customs, traditions and values from the time before our grandfathers and grandmothers. He would say that we reject the way the mining company has operated in our community. That we demand justice for the harms that they have caused to us. And he would say that we must continue the struggle.

This past year has been a time for silence and for mourning; now the time for action has come.