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## **Urgent Need to End Canadian Impunity for Mining Companies in Guatemala**

### **UNBC Geography + Rights Action Emergency Delegation to Guatemala, May 12-24, 2016**

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(Guatemala City, Guatemala) Starting today, Dr. Catherine Nolin and Grahame Russell are leading an emergency delegation to Guatemala to re-examine and update documentation on four major mining struggles throughout the country, all related to Canadian (and partially American) owned mining operations.

A documentary photographer, filmmaker, solidarity activists, and university researchers make up the delegation that has been organized to document, yet again, the continued environmental, human rights and community defense struggles of Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities that have suffered repression and a wide-range of harms caused directly and indirectly by Canadian (and American owned) mining operations.

We are calling on Canadians, on Parliament and on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to give special attention to the findings of the delegation focusing on long overdue needed reforms in Canada so as to be able to hold our companies fully accountable legally and politically, for repression, harms and violations they are causing in other countries.

Our efforts are building upon years of work by many groups and by a call set out in a recent open letter from close to 200 Latin American and international organizations demanding sweeping change to Canada's foreign policy regarding the global mining sector (See: <http://miningwatch.ca/news/2016/4/25/latin-american-organizations-hope-stronger-accountability-canadian-mining-overseas>). In the letter, the signatory organizations express hope for change in part based on previous support from Liberal Members of Parliament – including the Prime Minister – “towards the adoption of a legislative framework that would hold state agencies and companies to account for abuses related to Canadian mining companies’ overseas operations.”

During their time in Guatemala, the Canadian delegation will visit with communities, activists, lawyers, and concerned citizens involved in well-documented cases of repression, human rights violations and environmental harms caused by Goldcorp Inc's Marlin Mine, the Fenix Mine (formerly owned by Skye Resources and HudBay Minerals), the El Escobal Mine owned by Tahoe Resources, and the mining struggle of La Puya against Radius Gold which later sold to American-owned Kappes,

Cassiday & Associates (KCA).

Since 2004, these community and environmental defense struggles have been widely documented through research, solidarity visit reports, documentary films, photo essays, documentary photography, and through legal documents. And yet, “we continue to be astounded by the deafening silence and/or denials by the Canadian government, the Guatemalan government, mining companies and their investors,” states Grahame Russell, Rights Action’s director. “We should be long past discussions of improving corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies - these are simply voluntary measures that reinforce impunity and immunity from accountability.”

“Hudbay Mineral’s website, for example, proclaimed that the company “earned a ‘social licence’ by involving the neighbouring communities through listening to their comments and concerns,” notes Catherine Nolin, Chair of the UNBC Geography Program. “But, the primary concern and demand – that Hudbay leave the Q’eqchi’-Maya alone – never equated in the corporate CSR worldview. Instead, CSR becomes a tool to ignore the community’s vocal ‘no.’”

We are here to underscore the ugly point that the Canadian government and Canadian businesses have earned handsome profits conducting business with Guatemala’s genocidal generals, militaries and with corrupted politicians since the late 1990s. Some of these same military officials and politicians are facing criminal trials today over corruption and money laundering, as well as for their roles in the Guatemalan genocide.

In this context of corruption and impunity, and of staggering mining profits, the mining related repression, violations and harms - that have been documented since 2004, and that we will be revisiting on this trip - are both logical and predictable, with no end in sight.

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**We will be publishing trip updates at:**

- Facebook: <https://web.facebook.com/UNBCRightsActionGuate2016>
- Twitter: @cnolin, @RightsAction, and #CDNMiningImpunity #Guatemala #Mining

**For interviews and more information:**

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