



FREEDOM FOR ANASTASIA AND PETRONA!

Todos por Guatemala-All for Guatemala together with the Canadian organizations and people listed below, with great concern denounce the following to the national and international community:

- 1) Article 35 of the Constitution of the Republic of Guatemala establishes that freedom of expression and the functioning of independent journalism are fundamental in a democracy; however, those who freely express themselves are the object of criminalization. Especially journalists who report on the defence of nature or the fight against corruption and organized crime. A clear example is that of journalist Anastasia Mejía Tiriquiz, director of Xol Abaj Radio and Xol Abaj TV, and activist Petrona Siy Castro, arrested on September 22 this year by the National Civil Police (PNC) in the municipality of Joyabaj, Quiché, in the western region of the country.
- 2) That the PNC arrested them for the crimes of sedition, aggravated assault, arson and aggravated robbery, because Anastasia Mejía Tiriquiz, in the course of her journalistic work was covering a demonstration held by a group of Joyabaj residents on August 24 against the local mayor Francisco Carrascosa. Also, for investigating presumed acts of corruption in the Government of Carrascosa in the Joyabaj municipality.
- 3) That, although Guatemalan law establishes that the initial hearing should be held within 24 hours after a person is arrested, their initial hearing has not yet been held. Anastasia Mejía Tiriquiz and Petrona Siy Castro are being held in preventive detention in Quetzaltenango province. On October 8 they were to have a hearing, but it was postponed using COVID-19 as an excuse. In the same way, the hearing scheduled for October 15 was again postponed.

Because of this we demand:

- 1) That the Guatemalan State respect the country's laws, in particular Article 35 of its Constitution, which establishes freedom of expression and the functioning of independent journalism; and that it orders **immediate freedom for journalist Anastasia Mejía Tiriquiz and activist Petrona Siy Castro**, because to report and demonstrate is not a crime.
- 2) That the Minister of the Interior, Oliverio García Rodas, investigate the National Civil Police agents who participated in the illegal arrest.
- 3) That the Office of Guatemala's Public Prosecutor also investigate the judge who ordered the arrest, as well as mayor Francisco Carrascosa.

We invite human rights entities and individuals of the national and international community to unite their voices and denounce this situation to protect the rights of Anastasia Mejía Tiriquiz and Petrona Siy Castro.

Canada, October 25, 2020

#NoMoreRacism #FreedomOfExpression

#FreedomForAnastasia #FreedomForPetrona

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