

Historic rights trial brought by Guatemalan Maya Q'eqchi' community gets underway

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San Jose, February 12 (RHC)-- In Costa Rica, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights heard oral arguments in a historic case of an Indigenous community accusing the Guatemalan government of violating their ancestral and collective land rights.

Maya Q'eqchi' residents of Agua Caliente, in the eastern Guatemalan region of El Estor, have fought to obtain formal titles for their lands for over 40 years, in a struggle to protect their communities from extractive industries.

Rodrigo Tot, a Q'eqchi' leader and winner of the Goldman Environmental Prize in 2017, testified in front of the court about the repression he and other land defenders have faced from the Guatemalan government. He told reporters: "We have faced many threats in response to our resistance. The most painful was the loss of my son. ... His killers thought I'd stay silent, but what's motivated me the most is that since my son's assassination, more leaders have stepped up, like me, to fight for our land."

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