

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

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May 10, 2019

Ms. Michelle Bachelet Jeria
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
Palais Wilson
52 rue des Pâquis
CH-1201 Geneva, Switzerland
Via Email: ccpr@ohchr.org

Open Letter: UBCIC Condemns the Reprehensible Persecution of Margot Pérez and All Forms of Violence and Intimidation Against Indigenous Peoples in El Salvador

Dear Ms. Michelle Bachelet Jeria:

The Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) stands in solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples of El Salvador who share with the First Nations of Canada a history of invasion, colonization, and cultural genocide. It is in this solidarity and the commitment to justice that UBCIC writes to you regarding the shameful persecution of Margot Pérez – a persecution that has resulted in the brutal murder of her brother-in-law and the continued reign of coercion and threats against Indigenous Peoples in El Salvador.

Margot Pérez is a passionate advocate for Indigenous people and has worked tirelessly in her home community of Nahuizalco to advance the fundamental rights of the Nahuatl Pipil people and to protect the sacred elements of the earth. A little over two weeks ago she served as a co-chair for the Global Indigenous Peoples Caucus. Now, she faces a targeted regime of violence and death at the hands of assassins who have been hired by hydroelectric power plants to silence Margot.

Following Margot's escape from Nahuizalco, military police shot and killed her brother-in-law, Jose Alfredo Hernandez, on May 3, 2019. As corrupt local authorities turn a blind eye to the crimes committed, not only is Margot's life in imminent danger, but so too are the lives of Jose Alfredo Hernandez's wife and three children.

Through UBCIC Resolution 2000-11, UBCIC committed to focusing on the protection of Indigenous knowledge, self-determination and traditional resource rights at national and international levels. It is in

the defence of the international rights of Indigenous Peoples enshrined in the United Nations Human Rights System that UBCIC condemns the shameful acts of violence in El Salvador that are borne aloft by corporate interests. We urgently call upon you to investigate the threats against Margot Pérez in order to bring justice to those that systemically violate and threaten Indigenous rights. We also urge you to take immediate action to protect Margot, her family, and those in her community that are endangered.

In line with Article 7 of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* that states that Indigenous Peoples have the collective right “to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples and shall not be subjected to any act of genocide or any other act of violence,” the repression, harassment, threats, and assassinations against the Indigenous Peoples of El Salvador must be stopped. We hope that you can help hold the government of El Salvador accountable to its obligation to respect and protect the rights, dignity, and well-being of all of its citizens.

On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS



Grand Chief Stewart Phillip
President



Kukpi7 Judy Wilson
Secretary-Treasurer

CC: Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Michel Forst, Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders