

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MAYAN ORGANIZATIONS CALL FOR INTERNATIONAL ACTION TO HALT VIOLATIONS OF THEIR CULTURAL, SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS RIGHTS AND THE DISPOSSESSION OF THEIR CEREMONIAL CENTERS IN GUATEMALA



Lake Atitlán, Panajachel, Sololá, Guatemala, January 2022.

Photo: R. Múkaro Agüeibaná Borrero

May 9, 2022, Guatemala City: The Mayan Council Chilam B'alam of the K'iches, the Mayan Council Komon Ajq'ijab', the National Coordinator of the Territories of Life Network (Coordinadora Nacional Red Territorios de Vida), the National Ajq'ijab' Council "Oxlajuj Ajpop," and the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), inform the national and international communities that on May 4th, 2022 they presented a communication requesting urgent action by the United Nations Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) Early Warning and Urgent Action Procedure.

The urgent communication was submitted in response to the first reading of Bill No. 5923, "*Rescue of the Pre-Hispanic Heritage*", developed by the Congress of the Republic of Guatemala. Its provisions will cause the dispossession, privatization, and economic exploitation of two thousand seven hundred and fifty-four (2754) ceremonial centers, sacred sites, and other elements of Mayan spiritual, religious, and cultural heritage. Ceremonial areas in 22 Guatemalan departments will be impacted, including those surrounding Lake Atitlán in the department of Sololá which is sacred to the Maya Kaqchiles.



The submitting organizations are calling for urgent action by these UN human rights mandate holders to address the promotion of this Bill by the Guatemala Ministry of Culture and Sports, the Cultural Commission of the Congress, and the Congress itself, which in their view represents serious human rights violations and fails to comply with Guatemala's obligations under various international and regional instruments affirming the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Specifically, if adopted, the Bill would violate Guatemala's obligation to carry out effective consultations for the purpose of obtaining the Free, Prior and Informed Consent of the Mayan People, and would maintain the pattern of racism and discrimination carried out against the Indigenous Peoples of Guatemalan.

These Indigenous organizations call upon these thematic Rapporteurs and the CERD to take action in support of the Mayan People's rights in accordance with their mandates and provide strong recommendations to address and remedy this urgent situation currently faced by the Mayan People.

*For further information related to this note,
please contact juanleon@treatycouncil.org or visit www.iitc.org.
For a copy of the full submission in Spanish only, [click here](#).*

The International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) is an organization of Indigenous Peoples from North, Central, South America, the Caribbean and the Pacific working for the Sovereignty and Self Determination of Indigenous Peoples and the recognition and protection of Indigenous Rights, Treaties, Traditional Cultures and Sacred Lands.