

**Maya Woman of Santa Cruz for Respect and Dignity**  
**Golden Stream Village**  
**July 3, 2015**

I am a mother with five beautiful children from the village of Santa Cruz. My words today speak the voice of many of the mothers and women in our villages. As mothers we raise our children and our families to be hard working and to be respectful. As mothers we can tell wrong from right. Today I want to tell you of my concerns over what happened in my village.

Like all Maya women, I know that our villages have always been organized, peaceful and welcoming to visitors and new people. Those who have visited with us know that this is the truth. We know how to take care of our village, our people and our visitors.

In the early mornings of Wednesday, June 24<sup>th</sup>, we were frightened to hear that other mothers in our community had their husbands and sons dragged out of their sleep by armed police officers. We, the mothers, want to make it very clear to the government that we are hurt because our husbands and sons are not criminals. This action of the government will not fade away anytime soon. One of our mothers was hurt, stepped on by a police officer, and many children were terrorized.

Our hurt goes deeper when we heard that Ms. Cristina Coc was arrested. You do not hear the voices of the Maya women every day. As a village we asked Ms. Cristina to be present in our meeting. We asked her to come to our community and to be the spokesperson for our village during this time. She did not do anything wrong yet by force she was also taken by the police. When she speaks for us, she lifts us all and she makes us proud! I want to say that the government's action on Cristina is against all of us mothers. She is also a mother of two little children! Putting Cristina in jail is putting all of us mothers in jail. Cristina like all of us Mayas is not a criminal.

I, like all the mothers of Santa Cruz, respect the courage of Cristina. Your courage gives us hope and we will tell your story to our children so that you and our husbands and sons will not be forgotten.

To end, I want to say that Uxben Ka is a very special place for us. Not only does it hold our proud history, for us the mothers, we see a future of providing for our families by selling our crafts in this site. This is why we agreed to protect it, not for today but for the future.

My name is Rosario Teul. We the mothers want Belize to know that we are all caring and respectful people. We ask that our words be heard. We want a Belize that will respect our customary way of life. Thank you.