

Jerónimo Osorio Chen of the Ixcán Referendum Commission is a human rights leader from rural Ixcán, Quiché, Guatemala. For over a decade, he has worked to promote indigenous rights, cooperative economics, and citizen participation in the face of threats from corporate-led development schemes, including mega-projects and free trade. A former elected official in the local government, Jerónimo has played a key role in organizing and doing follow-up work on a 2007 referendum in which people in the Ixcán voted against the Xalalá hydroelectric dam and oil exploration in the region. Jerónimo is an Achi Maya from Río Negro, where the Guatemalan government committed several massacres in the 1980s against communities that opposed the building of the Chixoy dam on their lands. He will speak about people's struggles to oppose the Xalalá Dam and the importance of avoiding a repeat of the Chixoy tragedy, including the repression, loss of lands, and damage to the ecosystem associated with massive dam projects.