

via fax 011 503 2243 7857
Sr. Mauricio Funes
 President of El Salvador

via fax 011 503 2523 7000
Sr. Romeo Benjamin Barahona
 Attorney General of El Salvador

July 2, 2011

Dear Sirs:

We are writing to express our deep concern regarding the violence perpetrated against environmental defenders, especially members of the Comité Ambiental de Cabañas (CAC). On June 14 the body of **Juan Francisco Duran Ayala** was found in Lamatepec Colony in Soyapngo municipality. He had been shot twice in the head, execution style. He had last been seen on June 9, the day after he had been putting up flyers and banners in the city of Ilobasco, Cabañas. His work was part of a CAC campaign to educate the community about the health and environmental risks of cyanide contamination from Pacific Rim's El Dorado gold mine.

The El Dorado mine is currently non-operational due to a suspension of activities resulting from an ongoing legal case. Canadian-based Pacific Rim is seeking to have it re-opened, despite widespread opposition in Cabañas. The operation initially closed after local protests. The previous Salvadoran administration negated Pacific Rim's mining permits in late 2008. President Funes furthermore stated his opposition during his 2009 presidential campaign. In response, Pacific Rim opened an arbitration case against the Salvadoran government seeking millions of dollars in compensation. (A similar legal challenge by another mining company, Milwaukee-based Commerce Group, was rejected by the CAFTA tribunal in April of this year.)

As we're sure you are aware, this is not the first case of violence against CAC activists. Gustavo Marcelo was disappeared, tortured and assassinated in June of 2009. (We were glad to learn that the material authors of his assassination were convicted in September 2010.) In December 2009, CAC members Ramiro Rivera and Alicia Recinos Sorto were murdered. Community radio station Radio Victoria has been reporting on the activities of the mining-opposition movement. As a result, Radio Victoria staff have received numerous death threats. We have written to Salvadoran officials several times over the past three years demanding protection for environmental activists in Cabañas and journalists reporting on their activities.

Based on the facts presented above, we urge that you

- carry out an immediate, impartial and thorough investigation into the killing of human rights defender and anti-mining activist Juan Francisco Duran Ayala, with the purpose of making the results public and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
- take all necessary measures to effectively and adequately ensure the physical and psychological integrity and security of all members of the Comité Ambiental de Cabañas (CAC) and other anti-mining activists and their families;
- guarantee that all human rights defenders in El Salvador, carrying out their legitimate and peaceful work in the defense of human rights, are able to operate free of restriction and reprisals.

You have the power and the consequent responsibility to see that the health and human rights of all people within your jurisdiction are protected. We strongly urge you to do so.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

copies: Mari Carmen Aponte, US Ambassador to El Salvador ~ fax: 011-503-2501-2154
 Francisco Altshul Charge d'Affaires, Embassy of El Salvador to the US ~ via fax: 1-202-234-3834
 Melanie Bonner, El Salvador Desk at U.S. State Dept. ~ fax: 202-647-2597
 Dinah Shelton, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ fax: (202)458-3992
 Maria Silvia Guillén, El Salvador member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ fax: (202)458-3992
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Renacci, Ryan, Sutton ~ via email

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The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: