

<p>Sr. Presidente Andrés Manuel López Obrador President of the Republic of Mexico via US mail</p>	<p>Sra. Ministra Olga Sánchez Cordero Minister of the Interior of Mexico via email: secretario@segob.gob.mx</p>
<p>Sr. Gobernador Rutilio Escandón Cadenas Governor of the State of Chiapas via email: secparticular@chiapas.gob.mx</p>	<p>Sr. Juan José Zepeda Bermúdez President of the State Commission for Human Rights of Chiapas via email: presidencia@cedh-chiapas.org</p>

January 13, 2021

Dear Sirs and Madame:

We are concerned about threats made against a group of **fifteen members of the Jovel Valley Environmental Network in Chiapas State.**

On December 2, 2020, the Jovel Valley Environmental Network filed a complaint of ecocide with the Office off the District Attorney of San Cristóbal de las Casas (Chiapas State) for the actions of a construction company in the *Maria Eugenia* wetlands, a natural area of 115 hectares. The wetlands are the main source of drinking water for the area, serve an important role in flood regulation, and are the habitat for a number of endangered species of flora and fauna found only in this ecosystem. Currently the wetlands are threatened by the land being filled in, paved, and built over. This leads to a shortage of water, contamination causing human infection, and destruction of the ecological balance.


On the morning of December 29, 2020, fifteen members of the Jovel Valley Environmental Network were verbally attacked and threatened while they were digging a drainage ditch to protect the wetlands. (Nearby, several buildings are being constructed that would endanger the wetland ecosystem.) In order to prevent flooding from adjacent neighborhoods, the group was digging an infiltration ditch on the road that connects the wetlands with the neighborhood (*colonia*) FSTSE 2001. (Unknown persons had already destroyed two previous ditches.) The people who made the threats told the group of fifteen wetlands defenders to stop digging since it was "their territory." They threatened to tie up them up and slice them. Another group of aggressors (linked to the first group) arrived with more threats, stating that they were already bothered by the actions of Manuel Lemus, the director of Ecology and Environment of San Cristóbal de Las Casas.

After the environmental workers moved to the wetlands park, the group of aggressors, in the presence of the municipal police, covered the infiltration ditch and closed the access to the road to the colonia FSTSE 2001.

We **strongly urge** that you

- immediately, thoroughly and impartially investigate the aforementioned attacks, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice;
- adopt measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of the members of the Jovel Valley Environmental Network.

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinators


Christine L. Stonebraker Martinez

copies: Ismael Brito Mazariegos, Secretary General of the Government in Chiapas ~ via email
Alejandro Encinas Rodríguez, Undersecretary of Human Rights and Population, Ministry of the Interior (SEGOB) ~ via email
María del Rosario Piedra Ibarra President of the National Commission for Human Rights (CNDH) ~ via email
Martha Bárcena Coqui, Mexican Ambassador to the US ~ via email
OAS: Inter-American Commission on Human Rights: Esmeralda Arosemena de Troitiño, Rapporteur for Mexico ~ via email and US mail
OAS: Inter-American Commission on Human Rights: Antonia Urrejola Noguera, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ~ via email and US mail
OAS: Jorge Lomónaco, Permanent Mission of Mexico to the Organization of American States ~ via email
OBS: Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders ~ via email
Christopher Landau, Ambassador of the US to Mexico ~ via email
David Anthony Rodriguez , US State Department, Political Officer , Office of Mexican Affairs ~ via email
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

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