

Blanca Sarahí Izaguirre Lozano National Commissioner for Human Rights of Honduras	Lica. Karla Eugenia Cueva Aguilar Secretary for Human Rights of Honduras
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August 2, 2021

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre and Secretary Cueva:

We are disturbed by the continued harassment of environmental defenders who are organizing to protect the Guapinol River in Colón Department. At around 4:00pm on July 23, agents of the National Police in the community of Pajuales, municipality of Tela, Atlántida Department, unjustly detained **Reynaldo Domínguez** and released him an hour later.

Residents of the community of El Guapinol in Tocoa, Colón Department, organized the Encampment on the Defense of Water and Life in August 2018. They identified several environmental, social, human, and economic impacts of large scale mining projects in the Atlantic zone carried out by the mining company Inversiones Los Pinares. They have documented how Los Pinares, as it makes preparations to open an iron oxide mine for production of steel by the US-based company Nucor Corporation, is destroying animal life and contaminating small rivers (water sources for 13 communities) that empty into the Río Aguán.

In October 2018, a court in San Pedro Sula, Cortés Department, issued an order to criminalize environmental and territorial rights defenders by using a law that was designed to prosecute members of highly dangerous crimes, such as those committed by gangs and other organized crime. Reynaldo Domínguez was imprisoned between January and February 2019 along with 11 colleagues. On July 23, 2021, despite the fact that Reynaldo Domínguez presented his letter of exoneration from the criminal processes for which Los Pinares accuses him, he was nevertheless detained by the National Police. We see this act of harassment as a form of intimidation.

Reynaldo Domínguez is one of many environmental defenders in the northern coastal departments of Honduras who continue to defend the Guapinol River and advocate for the release of the Guapinol 8—eight environmental defenders who have been in pre-trial detention since September 2019. In June, the Committee Pro-Defense for the Common Good (*El Comité Municipal en Defensa de los Bienes Comunes y Públicos*) presented an environmental impact report to the Secretariat of Natural Resources and Environment. The report shows how the exploration and exploitation operations of Los Pinares is contaminating the Guapinol River and San Pedro Rivers. Their goal is to have the government cancel the environmental license granted to Inversiones Los Pinares to operate the iron oxide mine within the Montaña de Botaderos National Park.

We urge that you:

- instruct the police and other authorities to stop the harassment and violation of civil rights of Reynaldo Domínguez and other environmental defenders
- advocate for the cancellation of the environmental license granted to Inversiones Los Pinares

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator


 Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Oscar Chinchilla Banegas, Attorney General ~ via email
 Luis Fernando Suazo Barahona, Ambassador of Honduras to the US ~ via email and US mail
 Joel Hernández García, Rapporteur for Honduras, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email and US mail
 Isabel Albaladejo Escribano, Representative to Honduras of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OACNUDH) ~ via email
 US Embassy in Honduras: Colleen Hoey, Chargé d'Affaires; Nate Rettenmayer, Political Officer ~ via email
 US State Dept: Honduras Desk ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, Gibbs, González, 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: