

Blanca Sarahí Izaguirre Lozano
 National Commissioner for Human Rights of Honduras (CONADEH)
 via email

June 21, 2023

Dear Commissioner Izaguirre Lozano:

We are saddened and outraged over the assassination of environmental defender **Oquelí Domínguez** on June 15. At 10:30am he was shot by two men on a motorcycle at his family's home in the community of Guapinol (Tocoa municipality, Colón Department, Aguán Valley). His mother, Catalina Ramos, was shot in the leg.

He is the second member of the Domínguez family assassinated in recent months. His brother Aly Domínguez, a co-founder of Guapinol's grassroots resistance against an iron oxide mine, was killed along with Jairo Bonilla on January 7 (cf our letter 24 JAN 2023). Both are brothers of internationally recognized environmental defender Reynaldo Domínguez, who has been systematically persecuted by the Honduran State through criminalization and the victim of smear and defamation campaigns for his work defending and protecting Carlos Escaleras National Park and the Guapinol River and San Pedro River.


Five years of persecution points to an illegal iron oxide mine owned by Inversiones Los Pinares/Ecotek, located in a carved out slice of the Montaña de Botaderos National Park "Carlos Escaleras." The Municipal Committee in Defense of the Common and Public Goods (CMDBCPT) of Tocoa has denounced since August 2022 a hate and smear campaign that has escalated to surveillance, harassment, and threats against the lives of leaders who oppose the destruction of the park for the installation of two open-pit mining concessions. CMDBCPT warned that agribusiness corporations like Dinant were surveilling and planning to assassinate peasant leadership because of the farmers' efforts to reclaim lands stolen from them (cf our letter of 23 NOV 2022). Inversiones Los Pinares/Ecotek is co-owned by the politically powerful Lenir Pérez and his wife Ana Facussé, daughter of the deceased oligarch and land baron Miguel Facussé, who was also the owner of Dinant.

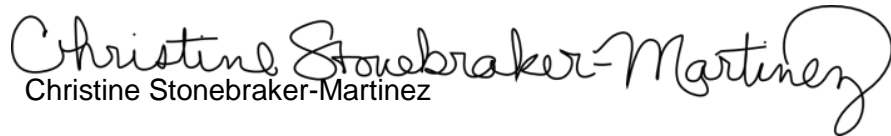
The Domínguez brothers are among 32 Guapinol residents criminalized for their resistance to the mining operations. Both were active in the campaign to release the "Guapinol 8," eight of their neighbors who were unjustly criminalized for 914 days until the Supreme Court's Constitutional Chamber unanimously sided with the defendants in two long-standing appeals and threw out the case. They were released February 24, 2022.

We strongly urge that the government of Honduras take decisive action to end the violence surrounding the controversial mining project of Inversiones Los Pinares:

- investigate the assassination of Oquelí Domínguez, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- cancel the illegal mining concession, as President Xiomara Castro has promised
- demilitarize the Guapinol community as a first step in distancing the government from protecting the interests of Inversiones Los Pinares over those of local residents

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator


 Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Javier Efraín Bú Soto, Ambassador of Honduras in Washington, DC ~ via email and US mail
 Carlos Pulido, Rapporteur for Honduras, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) ~ via email and US mail
 Jsabel Albaladejo Escribano, Representative to Honduras of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OACNUDH) ~ via email
 Alice Shackelford, UN Resident Coordinator in Honduras, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ~ via email
 US Embassy in Honduras: Ambassador Laura F. Dogu and Human Rights Officer Ariel Jahner ~ via email
 US State Department: Bryan Schell, Honduras Desk Officer ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Vance and US Representatives Beatty, Brown, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Miller, Sykes ~ via email

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