

# URGENT ACTION

## WATER DEFENDER KILLED

On Saturday, September 14, environmental defender and coordinator of the Municipal Committee for the Defense of Common and Public Assets (CMDBCPT), Juan López, was murdered as he was leaving his work as a community and religious leader in the parish of San Isidro Labrador in the municipality of Tocoa, department of Colón, northern Honduras. According to public reports, Juan López was shot by an unidentified person on a motorcycle. We demand the Honduran authorities to ensure a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of Juan López, as well as other killings and attacks against the defenders of the Guapinol river, to refrain from using the justice system to harass them, and to ensure integral protection to Lopez's family, CMDBCPT members, their legal team, and witnesses.

### TAKE ACTION:

- Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
- [Click here](#) to let us know the actions you took on **Urgent Action 85.24**. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

**Joel Antonio Zelaya Álvarez**  
**Attorney General**  
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**CC: Honduran Embassy in the United States**  
**Ambassador Rafael Fernando Sierra**  
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Dear Attorney General,

I am writing to express my deep dismay and concern about the security situation of the defenders of the Guapinol river in Tocoa. Human rights defender and community leader, **Juan López**, was killed in the municipality of Tocoa on September 14, 2024. Community members in Tocoa - Aly Magdaleno Domínguez Ramos, Jairo Bonilla Ayala, and Oquelí Domínguez - were also killed in 2023.

The people of Guapinol and other communities of Tocoa have faced continued attacks because they peacefully challenge the legality of a mining project in the Carlos Escaleras National Park, including the unjust detention of eight defenders of the Guapinol river, known as the "Guapinol eight".

The authorities responsible for the investigation of the killing of Juan López must guarantee the right of the human rights defender's families to justice, truth, and reparation. Though some progress has been made on identifying those responsible for the murder, I ask for this investigation to continue until all of those involved with the murder of this defender are identified, considering the victim's human rights work as a hypothesis for these crimes. I also urge you to ensure that authorities refrain from using the justice system to harass the defenders of the Guapinol river and take immediate steps to fully provide appropriate protection to Lopez's family, CMDBCPT members, their legal team, and witnesses in accordance with them.

Yours sincerely,

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Several communities, campesino groups, parishes, and local organizations in the municipality of Tocoa (department of Colón), North of Honduras, led by the Municipal Committee for the Defense of Common and Public Assets (Comité Municipal por la Defensa de los Bienes Comunes y Públicos, CMDBCP) oppose the operating license issued to the mining company Inversiones Los Pinares in the Carlos Escalera National Park, formerly known as Montaña de Botaderos, since 2015.

On August 1, 2018, local residents set up the “Guapinol camp” to peacefully protest the license and mining exploitation in the core zone of a protected area of the water sources on which they depend for their survival. Members of the CMDBCP have faced at least two criminal proceedings since 2018 for defending the Guapinol and San Pedro Rivers of the impacts mining project. Aly and his brother, Reynaldo Dominguez, as well as Juan López, Leonel George, Marco Tulio Ramos, Eugenio Esquivel, and Adaly Cedillo spent time in prison in 2019 along with other Guapinol River defenders for these proceedings.

The same proceedings led to the [unjust detention of eight defenders of the Guapinol river](#) for more than two years solely for peacefully defending the right to clean water. After rigorous analysis, Amnesty International determined that the case file shows multiple flaws in the investigation and declared them prisoners of conscience. Following a Supreme Court ruling citing violations of the right to due process, the eight defenders of the Guapinol river were released in February 2021. In a separate decision, in June 2022, this court annulled similarly unfounded criminal proceedings against Juan López, Leonel George, Reynaldo Domínguez, Marco Tulio Ramos, and Adaly Cedillo.

On January 7, 2023, Aly Magdalena Domínguez Ramos and Jairo Bonilla Ayala were intercepted by armed assailants as they were returning home and shot and killed on the spot, according to their relatives.

Over the last five years Amnesty International has alerted on numerous death and other types of attacks against activists in Honduras, which is one of the deadliest countries in the world to be a human rights defender. Honduras still one of the deadliest countries in the world for land and environmental defenders. Despite the seriousness of the attacks on these defenders, Honduras has not yet signed the Escazú Agreement, the first environmental human rights treaty in Latin America and the Caribbean, which obliges signatory states to protect environmental defenders and entered into force on April 22, 2021.

Good News: On October 4, 2024, [the Attorney General of Honduras reported](#) that two people were arrested as alleged perpetrator and accomplice respectively in the murder of Juan Lopez. On October 6, a [lawyer accompanying the case reported](#) that the Public Prosecutor's Office ratified the indictment against three people accused of involvement in the murder of the environmental defender. We ask you to continue sending this Urgent Action to ensure that Honduran authorities bring all those involved in the murder of Juan López to justice and that the people close to him are protected.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** Spanish or your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** November 14, 2024

**NAME AND PRONOUN:** Juan López (he/his)