

URGENT ACTION

JUSTICE FOR WATER DEFENDER KILLED

On Saturday, September 14, 2024, 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 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 **Second 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 of Honduras
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CC: Honduran Embassy in the United States
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1220 19th St NW #320,
Washington, D.C. 20036
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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. This is not the first killing of community members in Tocoa. In 2023, Aly Magdalena Domínguez Ramos, Jairo Bonilla Ayala and Oquelí Domínguez were also killed. The authorities have yet to identify all responsible for the murder.

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. Therefore, I urge you to immediately conduct a prompt, independent, impartial, and exhaustive investigation to identify all suspected responsible for the murder of the defender considering the victim's human rights work as a hypothesis for these crimes. I also urge you to 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

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**. The week after, the Public Prosecutor's Office ratified the indictment against three people accused of involvement in the murder of the environmental defender, and a local court ordered the three alleged perpetrators of the defender's murder to be formally indicted and held in custody.

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. 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.

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 that provoked international outcry. 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 Magdaleno Domínguez Ramos and Jairo Bonilla Ayala were intercepted by armed assailants and shot and killed on the spot, according to their relatives. Aly is the brother of Reynaldo Domínguez. Both, as well as Juan López, Leonel George, Marco Tulio Ramos, Eugenio Esquivel, and Adaly Cedillo are among the 32 people criminalized by the mining company Inversiones Los Pinares and the State of Honduras for defending the Carlos Escaleras National Park. Five months later, on June 15, 2023, Oquelí Domínguez, brother of defenders Aly and Reynaldo Domínguez was also killed in the community of Guapinol.

On February 7, 2023, lawyers of the Guapinol defenders were notified that the prosecutor's office in Tocoa had appealed in December 2022 a favorable resolution of the Supreme Court of Justice that annulled unfounded criminal proceedings against five Guapinol defenders Juan López, Leonel George, Reynaldo Domínguez, Marco Tulio Ramos, and Adaly Cedillo. Therefore, they could have faced criminal prosecution for peacefully challenging the legality of a mining project in the Carlos Escaleras National Park. On September 19, 2024, a local court notified the lawyers of the Guapinol defenders that admitted the appeal, but one month later, another local court issued a definitive dismissal in favor of the five defenders, including Juan López.

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

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: December 26, 2024

NAME AND PRONOUN: Juan López (he/his)