

Justice for Juan Francisco Duran Ayala

The organizations below hereby express our dismay at the murder of another environmentalist, member of Environmental Committee of Cabañas, Juan Francisco Duran Ayala.

We are deeply concerned about this murder as it indicates a trend of organized persecution against environmental activists in El Salvador. For several years members of environmental organizations have publicly denounced harassment and threats against their lives. Unfortunately, the death of Juan Francisco Duran Ayala follows the death of other activists of the same organization: Dora Alicia Recinos, who was eight months pregnant before she was assassinated on December 26, 2009; Ramiro Rivera, who was murdered during a military style ambush on December 20th 2009 and Marcelo Rivera, who was kidnapped, tortured and murdered in June 2009. None of these murders have been properly prosecuted.

There is evidence that the escalation of violent attacks against environmentalists is related to the presence of the foreign mining corporations in El Salvador. For years, these corporations have fostered a climate of conflict and social division in communities located in the department of Cabañas, and in the Salvadoran society in general, in order to obtain political and institutional support for their mineral exploitation projects.

Given the current atmosphere of gross violations of the rights to life, freedom of association and freedom of expression, we invoke the Salvadorean Environmental Law which establishes the “right to a clean environment and a healthy ecological equilibrium” and commits the government to “promote and defend this right in a systematic manner in order to ensure harmony between humans and nature”. In the spirit of the law we call:

1. On the President of the Republic of El Salvador, Mauricio Funes, the Attorney General, Romeo Barahona and the Minister of Public Security, Manuel Melgar, to ensure these crimes are investigated and that safety and peace return for all environmental activists who seek to protect the fragile ecology of the country.
2. On the Minister of Economy, Hector Dada Hirezi, and the Minister of the Environment, Herman Rosa Chavez, to declare an immediate cease of all metallic mining activity in El Salvador.
3. On the members of the Legislative Assembly to approve the mining legislation introduced by the National Roundtable Against Mining in El Salvador. This legislation prohibits metallic mining and regulates non-metallic mining exploitation.
4. On the mining companies to withdraw their operation from El Salvador. In particular we call upon Pacific Rim to cease its demand for compensation against the government of El Salvador under the CAFTA-DR arbitration rules.
5. On all international solidarity and Salvadorean Diaspora organizations to demand justice for environmental activists murdered in El Salvador.

Finally we would like to express our solidarity with the family of Juan Francisco Duran Ayala and all those who are under threat of death for defending the environment. We hope the rule of law will prevail and will ensure just prosecution and punishment for the intellectual and material authors of these crimes.

In Solidarity,

Atlantic Solidarity Network (Canadá)
Canadians Against Mining in El Salvador, CAMES
Canadian Labour Congress, CLC
Canadian Union of Public Employees, CUPE-Ontario
Center for Alternative Mining Development Policy(Wisconsin)
Comité pour les droits humains en Amérique latine, CDHAL(Montreal)
Committee for the Development of El Salvador, CODESES (Vancouver)
Educators for Peace and Justice, (Toronto)
Guatemala Solidarity Network, GCN (Canadá)
Jamie Muffet Media Design and Production (Philadelphia)
Justicia Minera (Ottawa)
Latin American and Caribbean Solidarity Network, LACSN (Toronto)*
*Barrio Nuevo
*Bolivia Solidarity Committee-Toronto
*Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association
*Casa Salvador Allende
*Colombia Action Solidarity Alliance (CASA)
*Hands off Venezuela/ Louis Riel Bolivarian Circle
*Honduras Frente de Resistencia-Toronto
*Latin American Trade Unionists Coalition- Ontario Chapter (LATUC)
*Mining Injustice Solidarity Network
*V́ctor Jara Cultural Group;
*Venezuela We Are With You Coalition;
*Toronto Forum on Cuba;
* The Toronto Haiti Action Committee (THAC)
Latin American Researchers of Ontario, LARO-Organizing Committee
Maryknoll Office for Global concerns (Washington)
Maryknoll Office for Global concerns (Washington)
Public Service Alliance of Canada, PSAC
Ontario Public Interest Research Group, OPIRG (Ottawa)
Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation, OSSTF
Polaris Institute(Ottawa)
Salvadorean Canadian Association, ASALCA (Toronto)
Salvadorean Canadian Association of the Ottawa Region, ASCORCAN
Salvadoreans in the World, SEEM-Toronto
Student Christian Movement(Canada)

Radio Raíces Radicales(Toronto/México/El Salvador)
St. Mary's Kerrisdale Cristosal Base Community (Vancouver)
The Democracy Center (San Francisco)
US-El Salvador Sister Cities, Seattle WA

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