



Institute for  
Policy Studies

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**PRESS CONTACTS:**

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**251 Organizations from 29 countries call on Salvadoran government to drop the charges against leading Water Defenders arrested on January 11**

**Organizaciones internacionales piden al gobierno salvadoreño que retire los cargos contra Defensores del Agua detenidos el 11 de enero [TEXTO EN ESPAÑOL ABAJO]**

*Washington, D.C. and San Salvador* – On January 20, 251 organizations from 29 countries released the following statement:

On January 11, at the order of the Salvadoran Attorney General, police arrested five prominent Water Defenders in northern El Salvador: Miguel Ángel Gámez, Alejandro Láinez García, Pedro Antonio Rivas Láinez, Antonio Pacheco, and Saúl Agustín Rivas Ortega.

These individuals were among leaders of the [historic and successful campaign](#) that convinced the Salvadoran legislature to unanimously pass a ban on metals mining in 2017 to save that nation's rivers. In 2009, the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) honored the coalition that several of the five helped build, the National Roundtable on Metals Mining, with IPS's Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Award.

Today, thanks in part to its ill-advised embrace of Bitcoin, the Salvadoran government is under enormous pressure to find new revenues. The government is reportedly considering overturning the mining ban, and allowing environmentally-destructive mining. Environmental and human rights organizations in El Salvador have stated that the arrests are politically motivated as they seek to silence these Water Defenders and to demobilize community opposition at this critical moment.

The five are accused by El Salvador's Attorney General of an alleged murder over 30 years ago during the brutal civil war in El Salvador that claimed the lives of 75,000. The victims of crimes from that war, which saw a U.S.-backed dictatorship and right-wing death squads kill tens of thousands, have, for decades, been calling for justice. The current government, however, has chosen to [actively uphold](#) decades of impunity. Rather than investigate or prosecute those responsible for the dozens of cases of human rights violations and crimes against humanity that members of the Salvadoran military committed against the Santa Marta community (including the murders of the Lempa River massacre in 1980, where 30 people were assassinated and 189 were disappeared), the government is now re-victimizing the community by targeting their leaders, who have been outspoken against the policies of the current government. This further raises questions about whether the Attorney General's true motivation is to attempt to silence these Water Defenders, especially in light of the current administration's crusade to criminalize, persecute and demobilize its political opponents.

The Salvadoran movement to ban mining and the Water Defenders who made it possible have been an inspiration to communities and civil society across the globe. Over the years, hundreds of groups around the world worked with the Salvadoran Water Defenders in the successful campaign to save the country's rivers from toxic gold mining.

The undersigned organizations join in demanding that the Salvadoran government drop the charges against the five Water Defenders and otherwise release them from prison to await their trial.

These groups are based in the following 29 countries: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bolivia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Germany, Guatemala, India, Ireland, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand Aotearoa, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Serbia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, United Kingdom, United States.

Signatories:

**Argentina**

Asamblea No a la Mina Esquel  
Diálogo 2000-Jubileo Sur Argentina  
Jachal No Se Toca

La Asamblea de Andalgalá  
La Asamblea de Chubut

### **Asia and Asian-Pacific**

Asia-Pacific Gathering on Human Rights and Extractives (AP Gathering)  
Focus on the Global South

### **Australia**

Aid/Watch  
Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network  
Australian National Campaign on Mining in the Philippines (ANCoMP)  
Philippines Australia Solidarity Association (PASA)  
Philippines Australia Union Link  
Rainforest Information Centre

### **Austria**

Informationsgruppe Lateinamerika (IGLA)

### **Basque Country**

A Planeta

### **Bolivia**

Fundación Abril  
TerraJusta

### **Canada**

Atlantic Regional Solidarity Network  
Blue Planet Project  
Breaking the Silence Network  
CELSAN  
CoDevelopment Canada (CoDev)  
Common Frontiers  
Friends of the Earth Canada  
Guatemala Research Group  
Inter Pares  
International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines Canada  
KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives  
Le Centre Oblat: A Voice for Justice  
Marcon  
MICLA - McGill Investigative Research on Canadian Mining in Latin America  
Mining Injustice Solidarity Network  
Mining Justice Alliance  
MiningWatch Canada  
Montreal for a World BEYOND War  
NB Media Co-op / COOP Média NB  
Rights Action  
RRSE  
Saint Gabriel's Parish, Longueuil, Canada  
SLAM Solidarité Laurentides Amérique Centrale  
Sustainable Northern Nova Scotia Society

The United Church of Canada  
Unifor  
United for Mining Justice

### **Central America**

Central American Alliance on Mining - ACAFREMIN

### **Chile**

Bloque Disidente Migrante  
Fundacion Feminas Latinas  
Fundación Tantí  
MODATIMA  
Observatorio Latinoamericano de Conflictos Ambientales OLCA  
Fundacion Chile Sustentable  
Observatorio Plurinacional de Salares Andinos

### **Colombia**

Corporación Ecológica y Cultural Penca de Sábila  
Enda-Colombia

### **Dominican Republic**

ODPP UASD

### **Ecuador**

Alianza de Organizaciones por l'os Derechos Humanos en el Ecuador  
Centro de Documentación en Derechos Humanos "Segundo Montes Mozo SJ" (CSMM)  
chambalabamba.org  
Ciudadana  
Observatorio Latinoamericano de Conflictos Ambientales  
OMASNE  
Organización sinchi warmi  
Somos Agua  
Yasunidos Guapondelig

### **El Salvador**

ADES  
Agrupación ciudadana por la despenalización del aborto en El Salvador  
FDIM  
Iglesias Hermanas  
International Allies Against Mining in El Salvador  
Mesa Nacional Frente a la Minería Metálica en El Salvador  
Movimiento Ecofeministas de El Salvador

### **Europe**

European Water Movement

### **France**

Asso Tierra y libertad para Arauco - Wallmapu  
Association SystExt

Attac 65 Commission Eau  
Attac 65 France Hautes Pyrénées  
collectif eau publique Les lilas  
Coordination EAU Île-de-France  
Eau Bien Commun France  
Eau-iledefrance  
Igapo Project  
Mix-Cité 45  
Romain Champalaune Photography  
Sentinelles de Rivières  
Simple Citoyen

### **Germany**

PowerShift

### **Global**

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom  
WUNRN-Women's UN Report Network  
Yes to Life No to Mining global solidarity network

### **Guatemala**

Protection International Mesoamérica

### **India**

All India Union of Forest Working People  
ENVIRONICS TRUST  
Mines, Minerals & People

### **Ireland**

CAIM - Communities Against the Injustice of Mining  
Drumgossatt/Knocknacran Residents Group  
Save Our Sperrins (SOS)

### **Latin America**

Asociación Americana de Juristas  
Ecos del Silencio  
Red Vigilancia Interamericana para la Defensa y Derecho al Agua, REDVIDA

### **Mexico**

AMERICAS PROGRAM AMERICAS.ORG  
Asociación por la Protección de la Tierra y Bienestar de Epazoyucan A. C.  
Bios Iguana A.C.  
Colectivo Azul México  
Comité de Solidaridad con El Salvador en México  
Conacyt México  
Espacio Migrante  
Frente Popular en Defensa del Soconusco (FPDS)  
Geocomunes  
Otros Mundos AC/Chiapas  
Red Mexicana de Acción frente al Libre Comercio (RMALC)

Red Mexicana de Afectadas/os por la Minería (REMA)  
Union de Comunidades Indígenas de la Zona Norte del Istmo"  
Witness- Lac

### **New Zealand**

Coromandel Watchdog of Hauraki

### **Netherlands**

De Olmenhorst

### **Paraguay**

Heñói Centro de Estudios

### **Peru**

Derechos Humanos Sin Fronteras  
Derechos Humanos y Medio Ambiente - DHUMA  
Frente de Defensa Ambiental de Cajamarca

### **Philippines**

Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM)  
Ang Aroroy Ay Alagaan, Inc.  
Asia Pacific Network of Environment Defenders (APNED)  
BAYAY SIBUYANON INC.  
ECIP National Secretariat  
Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment  
KuMaSa Na / Koalisyon ng Mamamayan at Sambayanan ng Northern Luzon at Southern Luzon  
Manila Observatory, Philippines  
Risk taker/AMMKAS/ATM  
SIBUYANON AGAINST MINING

### **Serbia**

Earth Thrive (UK)

### **Spain**

Asociación por la Paz y el Desarrollo  
Asociación Unimos Internacional  
Associació Internacional Enginyeria Sense Fronteres  
Ecologistas en Acción  
Fundación Montescola  
Justicia i Pau Barcelona  
Lumaltik Herriak  
Ongd AFRICANDO  
PAZ CON DIGNIDAD  
Paz con Dignidad El Salvador  
Perifèries del Món  
Salva la Selva

### **South Africa**

Rural Women's Assembly (Southern Africa)

**Sweden**

vetoNu

**Switzerland**

Eirene Suisse

**United Kingdom**

Environmental Network for Central America (ENCA)

London Mining Network

**United States**

A Community Voice

AGSCares

Alianza Americas

Alliance of Baptists

Anakbayan USA

Anthropocene Alliance

APLV

Bay Area Cuba Saving Lives Committee

Bomazeen Land Trust

Capybara Colectiva

CCEGL

Center for Farmworker Families

Center for International Environmental Law - CIEL

Central American Resource Center

Centro Latino Cuscatlan

Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America-CRLN

Chicanx/Latinx Caucus Cal State LA

Coal River Mountain Watch

Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES)

Community Water Justice

Denver Justice and Peace Committee

Diaspora Pa'Lante Collective

Doctors for Global Health

Doctors for Global Health- Los Angeles

Earthworks

Eighth Day Church

Eko Social Justice

Encuentro5

Episcopal Church

Erie Benedictines for Peace

Feminist Task Force

Ferris State University

Fundación Identidad Goterense

Global Exchange

Green Party of St. Louis

Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA

Gunntown Environmental Group

Haiti Action Committee

Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, USA-JPIC

Honor the Earth  
Immaculate Heart Community Commission on Immigrants, Refugees, Indigenous Peoples  
Institute for Policy Studies, Global Economy Project  
Institute of Philippine Studies, Human Rights and Sustainability  
InterReligious Task Force on Central America  
JB Foundation  
Kent County Local Management Board  
Kickapoo Peace Circle  
Klein and Roth Consulting  
La Resistencia  
Latin America Caucus of Interfaith Council for Peace & Justice  
Latin America Working Group (LAWG)  
Madison Arcatao Sister City Project  
Malach Consulting  
Midwest Environmental Advocates, Inc.  
National Lawyers Guild Task Force on Latin America  
Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala  
Nicaragua Center for Community Action  
Office of Peace, Justice, and Ecological Integrity/Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth  
Olympia Movement for Justice and Peace  
Oxfam  
Pax Christi  
Peace Action of Wisconsin  
People's Green New Deal committee of Madison Wisconsin USA  
Project South  
Provincial Council Clerics of St. Viator  
Region360  
REMUSADE  
Resist US-Led War Seattle  
Resistencia Comunitaria  
retired workers club  
Robert F Kennedy Human Rights  
Romero Interfaith Center  
Sac State Center on Race, Immigration and Social Justice  
Sacramento State's Center on Race Immigration and Social Justice  
Salvadoreños Unidos por la Democracia  
SHARE  
ShoreRivers  
Sister Cities US El Salvador  
Sister Cities, New Jersey Chapter  
Sister Parish of Decorah, Iowa  
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team  
Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chestnut Hill Philadelphia PA  
Sisters of St. Francis (Oldenburg)  
Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia  
SOA Watch  
St. Louis Green party  
STRANGERS NO LONGER (Michigan)  
Sunlight Media Collective  
The Mauricio Aquino Foundation Corporation  
The Social Forum



The Uplands Center  
U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph  
Unite North Metro Denver  
Universal African Peoples Organization  
University of Colorado-Boulder  
US-El Salvador Sister Cities  
UUFHCT  
War Resisters League  
Washington Ethical Society  
Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)  
WERU-Radio Sumpul US-El Salvador Sister City Committee  
Wisconsin Resources Protection Council  
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, U.S.

## **EN ESPAÑOL:**

**Como organizaciones internacionales pedimos al gobierno salvadoreño retirar los cargos contra Defensores del Agua detenidos el 11 de enero.**

*Washington, D.C. y San Salvador* – El 11 de enero, por orden del Ministerio Público de El Salvador, la policía arrestó a cinco destacados defensores del agua en el norte de El Salvador: Miguel Ángel Gámez, Alejandro Laínez García, Pedro Antonio Rivas Laínez, Antonio Pacheco y Saúl Agustín Rivas Ortega.

Estas personas fueron parte de los líderes de la histórica y exitosa campaña que convenció a la Asamblea Legislativa de El Salvador de aprobar por unanimidad la Ley de Prohibición de Minería Metálica de metales en 2017, para salvar los ríos de esa nación. En el 2009, el Instituto de Estudios de Políticas (IPS) honró a la coalición que varios de los cinco ayudaron a construir, la Mesa Nacional frente a la Minería Metálica, con el Premio de Derechos Humanos Letelier-Moffitt de IPS.

Hoy en día, gracias en parte a su desacertada adopción del Bitcoin, el gobierno salvadoreño está bajo una enorme presión para encontrar nuevos ingresos. Según los informes, el gobierno está considerando revocar la prohibición de la minería y permitir la minería destructiva para el medio ambiente. Las organizaciones ambientalistas y de derechos humanos en El Salvador han declarado que los arrestos tienen motivaciones políticas, ya que buscan silenciar a estos Defensores del Agua y desmovilizar a la oposición comunitaria en este momento crítico.

Los cinco están acusados por el Fiscal General de El Salvador de un presunto asesinato hace más de 30 años durante la brutal guerra civil en El Salvador que cobró la vida de 75,000 personas. Las víctimas de los crímenes de esa guerra, en la que una dictadura respaldada por los Estados Unidos y escuadrones de la muerte derechistas mataron a decenas de miles, llevan décadas pidiendo justicia. El actual gobierno, sin

embargo, ha optado por mantener activamente décadas de impunidad. En lugar de investigar o enjuiciar a los responsables de las decenas de casos de violaciones de derechos humanos y crímenes de lesa humanidad que militares salvadoreños cometieron contra la comunidad de Santa Marta (incluidos los asesinatos de la masacre del río Lempa en 1980, donde fueron asesinadas 30 personas y 189 desaparecidos), el gobierno ahora está revictimizando a la comunidad al atacar a sus líderes, quienes se han manifestado abiertamente en contra de las políticas del gobierno actual.

Esto plantea aún más dudas sobre si la verdadera motivación del Fiscal General es intentar silenciar a estos Defensores del Agua, especialmente tomando en cuenta la cruzada de la administración actual para criminalizar, perseguir y desmovilizar a sus opositores políticos.

El movimiento salvadoreño de prohibir la minería y los Defensores y Defensoras del Agua que lo hicieron posible han sido una inspiración para las comunidades y la sociedad civil alrededor del mundo. A lo largo de los años, cientos de grupos de todo el mundo trabajaron con los Defensores y Defensoras del Agua de El Salvador en la exitosa campaña para salvar los ríos del país de la tóxica minería de oro.

Las organizaciones abajo firmantes se unen para exigir la liberación de los cinco Defensores del Agua, que se retire el caso contra ellos, y al no ser así, que se les permita esperar su juicio en su comunidad.

Signatorios:

Organizaciones firmantes de varios países del mundo incluyendo Alemania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bolivia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, España, Estados Unidos, Europa, Francia, Filipinas, Guatemala, Holanda, India, Irlanda, México, País Vasco, Paraguay, Perú, República Dominicana, Sudáfrica, Suecia.

**Alemania**

PowerShift

**América Central - Region**

Central American Alliance on Mining - ACAFREMIN

**America Latina - Region**

Asociación Americana de Juristas

Ecos del Silencio

Red Vigilancia Interamericana para la Defensa y Derecho al Agua, REDVIDA

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Diálogo 2000-Jubileo Sur Argentina

Jachal No Se Toca

La Asamblea de Andalgalá  
La Asamblea de Chubut

**Asia y Asia-Pacífico**

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Focus on the Global South

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Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network  
Australian National Campaign on Mining in the Philippines (ANCoMP)  
Philippines Australia Solidarity Association (PASA)  
Philippines Australia Union Link  
Rainforest Information Centre

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Informationsgruppe Lateinamerika (IGLA)

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TerraJusta

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Common Frontiers  
Friends of the Earth Canada  
Guatemala Research Group  
Inter Pares  
International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines Canada  
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Le Centre Oblat: A Voice for Justice  
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MICLA - McGill Investigative Research on Canadian Mining in Latin America  
Mining Injustice Solidarity Network  
Mining Justice Alliance  
MiningWatch Canada  
Montreal for a World BEYOND War  
NB Media Co-op / COOP Média NB  
Rights Action  
RRSE  
Saint Gabriel's Parish, Longueuil, Canada  
SLAM Solidarité Laurentides Amérique Centrale  
Sustainable Northern Nova Scotia Society  
The United Church of Canada  
Unifor

United for Mining Justice

### **Chile**

Bloque Disidente Migrante

Fundacion Feminas Latinas

Fundación Tantí

MODATIMA

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Fundacion Chile Sustentable

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Enda-Colombia

### **Ecuador**

Alianza de Organizaciones por l'os Derechos Humanos en el Ecuador

Centro de Documentación en Derechos Humanos "Segundo Montes Mozo SJ" (CSMM)

chambalabamba.org

Ciudadana

Observatorio Latinoamericano de Conflictos Ambientales

OMASNE

Organización sinchi warmi

Somos Agua

Yasunidos Guapondelig

### **El Salvador**

ADES

Agrupación ciudadana por la despenalización del aborto en El Salvador

FDIM

Iglesias Hermanas

International Allies Against Mining in El Salvador

Mesa Nacional Frente a la Minería Metálica en El Salvador

Movimiento Ecofeministas de El Salvador

### **España**

Asociación por la Paz y el Desarrollo

Asociación Unimos Internacional

Associació Internacional Enginyeria Sense Fronteres

Ecologistas en Acción

Fundación Montescola

Justicia i Pau Barcelona

Lumaltik Herriak

Ongd AFRICANDO

PAZ CON DIGNIDAD

Paz con Dignidad El Salvador

Perifèries del Món

Salva la Selva

**Estados Unidos**

Bay Area Cuba Saving Lives Committee  
A Community Voice  
AGSCares  
Alianza Americas  
Alliance of Baptists  
Anakbayan USA  
Anthropocene Alliance  
APLV  
Bomazeen Land Trust  
Capybara Colectiva  
CCEGL  
Center for Farmworker Families  
Center for International Environmental Law - CIEL  
Central American Resource Center  
Centro Latino Cuscatlan  
Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America-CRLN  
Chicanx/Latinx Caucus Cal State LA  
Coal River Mountain Watch  
Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES)  
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Denver Justice and Peace Committee  
Diaspora Pa'Lante Collective  
Doctors for Global Health  
Doctors for Global Health- Los Angeles  
Earthworks  
Eighth Day Church  
Eko Social Justice  
Encuentro5  
Episcopal Church  
Erie Benedictines for Peace  
Feminist Task Force  
Ferris State University  
Fundación Identidad Goterense  
Global Exchange  
Green Party of St. Louis  
Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA  
Gunntown Environmental Group  
Haiti Action Committee  
Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, USA-JPIC  
Honor the Earth  
Immaculate Heart Community Commission on Immigrants, Refugees, Indigenous Peoples  
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InterReligious Task Force on Central America  
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Peace Action of Wisconsin  
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Provincial Council Clerics of St. Viator  
Region360  
REMUSADE  
Resist US-Led War Seattle  
Resistencia Comunitaria  
retired workers club  
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Sac State Center on Race, Immigration and Social Justice  
Sacramento State's Center on Race Immigration and Social Justice  
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ShoreRivers  
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Sister Cities, New Jersey Chapter  
Sister Parish of Decorah, Iowa  
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team  
Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chestnut Hill Philadelphia PA  
Sisters of St. Francis (Oldenburg)  
Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia  
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St. Louis Green party  
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The Social Forum  
The Uplands Center  
U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph  
Unite North Metro Denver  
Universal African Peoples Organization  
University of Colorado-Boulder  
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War Resisters League  
Washington Ethical Society  
Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)  
WERU-Radio Sumpul US-EI Salvador Sister City Committee  
Wisconsin Resources Protection Council  
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, U.S.

### **Europa**

European Water Movement

### **Filipinas**

Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM)  
Ang Arroy Ay Alagaan, Inc.  
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BAYAY SIBUYANON INC.  
ECIP National Secretariat  
Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment  
KuMaSa Na / Koalisyon ng Mamamayan at Sambayanan ng Northern Luzon at Southern Luzon  
Manila Observatory, Philippines  
Risk taker/AMMKAS/ATM  
SIBUYANON AGAINST MINING

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Association SystExt  
Attac 65 Commission Eau  
Attac 65 France Hautes Pyrénées  
collectif eau publique Les lilas  
Coordination EAU Île-de-France  
Eau Bien Commun France  
Eau-iledefrance  
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Mix-Cité 45  
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Simple Citoyen

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ENVIRONICS TRUST  
Mines, Minerals & People

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Drumgossatt/Knocknacran Residents Group  
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**México**

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Bios Iguana A.C.  
Colectivo Azul México  
Comité de Solidaridad con El Salvador en México  
Conacyt México  
Espacio Migrante  
Frente Popular en Defensa del Soconusco (FPDS)  
Geocomunes  
Otros Mundos AC/Chiapas  
Red Mexicana de Acción frente al Libre Comercio (RMALC)  
Red Mexicana de Afectadas/os por la Minería (REMA)  
Union de Comunidades Indígenas de la Zona Norte del Istmo  
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**Nueva Zelanda**

Coromandel Watchdog of Hauraki

**Países Bajos**

De Olmenhorst

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A Planeta

**Paraguay**

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**Perú**

Derechos Humanos Sin Fronteras  
Derechos Humanos y Medio Ambiente - DHUMA  
Frente de Defensa Ambiental de Cajamarca

**República Dominicana**

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**Reino Unido**

Environmental Network for Central America (ENCA)  
London Mining Network

**Serbia**

Earth Thrive (UK)



**Sudáfrica**

Rural Women's Assembly (Southern Africa)

**Suecia**

vetoNu

**Suiza**

Eirene Suisse

United States

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For nearly six decades, the [Institute for Policy Studies](#) has provided critical research support for major social movements and progressive leaders inside and outside government and on the ground around the United States and the world. As the United States' oldest progressive multi-issue think tank, IPS turns bold ideas into action through public scholarship and mentorship of the next generation of progressive scholars and activists.

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