

**Statement of Steven R. Donziger  
January 23, 2014**

I just returned from the Amazon region of Ecuador where I again witnessed firsthand the appalling failure of Chevron to address the contamination it left behind in dozens of indigenous and farmer communities. I met with a woman named Mariana Jimenez, a leader in the town of Lago Agrio who I have known for 15 years. She said to me: “We worry you are going to get tired and stop working.” I said: “Neither I nor any other lawyer is tired.”

To the contrary, our team is as animated, enthusiastic, and committed as ever to this case—far more so than we were in November 1993, the month when the initial lawsuit was filed. And unlike at the beginning of the case, we have an entire team of Ecuadorian, American, and international lawyers, advocates, and supporters who are continuing to fight and advance in the battle to hold Chevron accountable for its environmental crimes in Ecuador and the sham remediation it employed in the mid 1990s to cover up evidence of its wrongdoing. The land and water of Ecuador remains poisoned; cancer is rampant; even young children are dying of leukemia, according to independent health studies that have been submitted as evidence.

This battle is not about Steven Donziger nor is it about my family members who like me have been spied on by Chevron-paid agents at Kroll and other private investigative agencies. It never has been about me.

It is about the indigenous and farmer communities in Ecuador who continue to suffer because of Chevron’s refusal to clean up the toxic waste that it deliberately dumped. Chevron is trying to use me and other lawyers and advocates as a pass-through mechanism to try to destroy the valid legal claims of the rainforest villagers who continue to suffer because of the company’s pollution. Their idea is to use me to scare away others from helping people in Ecuador who are in desperate need of immediate relief. And their plan is also to use intimidation to deny vulnerable people access to public justice not only in their own country, but also in courts around the world as they try to enforce a judgment that Chevron refuses to pay.

I am here to defend the right of lawyers, activists, and journalists to do work that holds corporations like Chevron accountable. I am here to defend the rights of indigenous persons to hold corporations accountable when they get hit hard in isolated areas of the world where there is little or no access to the justice system or legal services. The right to bring litigation, speak to the media, engage with human rights advocates, work hand in hand with environmental activists, hold protests in front of the courthouse, and speak to public officials—those are the core First Amendment rights we are fighting to protect in the face of Chevron’s assault. In Chevron’s world, all of these activities—core First Amendment protected activities—can form the basis for a RICO conspiracy. This is the most anti-democratic, indeed anti-American, notion one can imagine.

That’s why people should care about this community-based battle for justice—because what happens here will make a difference to the future of not only thousands of people in Ecuador, but also for everybody in the United States and all over the world who cares about the well-being of our planet and corporate accountability.

I sincerely thank all the NGOs who have signed on to the letter for their support and their courage. The people of Ecuador and their many allies around the world will prevail.

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