



INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS

Commission internationale de juristes - Comisión Internacional de Juristas

" dedicated since 1952 to the primacy, coherence and implementation of international law and principles that advance human rights "

PRESS RELEASE

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International Commission of Jurists Condemns Harassment of Lawyers involved in Case Against US Oil Company in Ecuador

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) expressed its grave concern today at what it called serious and persistent harassment of lawyers in Ecuador representing 30,000 plaintiffs in a civil action against U.S. company, Chevron (formerly ChevronTexaco) for alleged damage to the environment and to the health of individuals resulting from the company's twenty-eight years of oil exploration (1964-1992) in that country.

In a letter sent to the Ecuadorian authorities today, the ICJ reminded the Ecuadorian Government of its obligations to prevent and investigate the incidents of harassment, stating that "The harassment of these lawyers is a violation of international standards on the administration of justice." The ICJ noted its particular concern, "because it appears that Government officials might be involved in some of the acts of harassment."

According to reliable information received by the ICJ, five lawyers representing the Plaintiffs in the case against Chevron have all been victims of serious forms of harassment during the course of this litigation, including office break-ins and confiscation of documents.

Despite petitions filed with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the UN Special Representative for Human Rights Defenders, who have both urged to authorities to protect the lawyers, recent events signal that the harassment continues.

The ICJ reminded the Ecuadorian Government that under international standards on the administration of justice it "has an obligation to take all necessary measures to ensure that the Plaintiffs and their legal representatives are free from any kind of harassment and other acts of intimidation". The ICJ also called on the Government to conduct an independent, impartial, exhaustive and effective investigation into the acts of intimidation carried out against persons involved in this case and bring those responsible to trial in an independent and impartial tribunal. Lastly, the authorities must ensure that the necessary conditions are met in order for the case *Aguinda v. ChevronTexaco* to be decided in a fair, independent and impartial manner in compliance with the international standards on the administration of justice.

About the ICJ:

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) consists of jurists, representing all regions and legal systems in the world, who work to uphold the rule of law and the legal protection of human rights. The ICJ's Centre for the Independence of Judges and

The ICJ is an international non-governmental organisation comprising sixty of the world's most eminent jurists and has a worldwide network of national sections and affiliated organisations

Lawyers (CIJL) is dedicated to promoting the independence of judges and lawyers throughout the world.

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