



Amazon In Focus

FALL 2022



AMAZON WATCH

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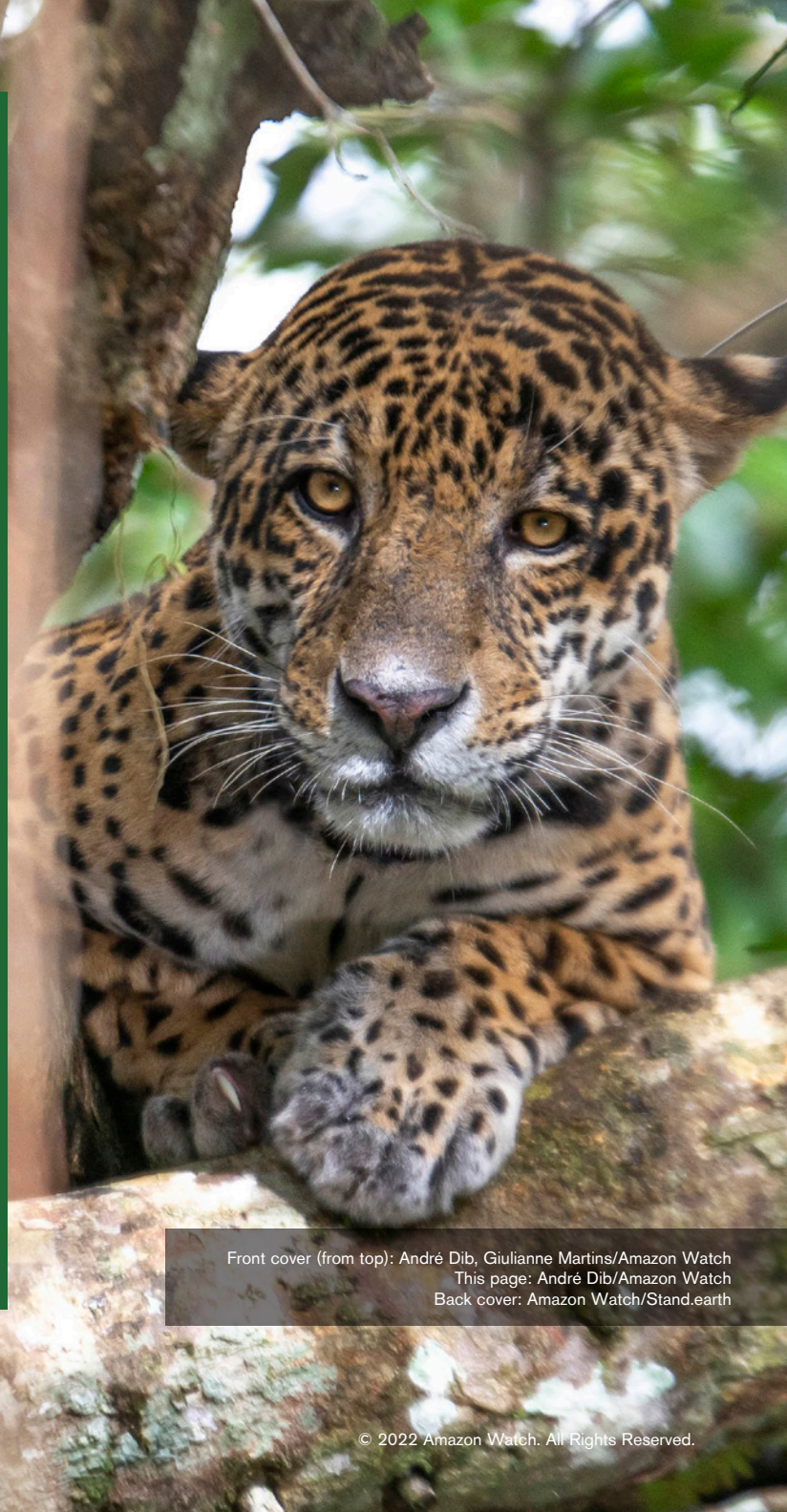
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Front cover (from top): André Dib, Giulianne Martins/Amazon Watch
This page: André Dib/Amazon Watch
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MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends of the Amazon,

The Amazon rainforest, its defenders, and our global climate are in a state of emergency. According to the latest scientific research, deforestation and degradation have compromised the ecological integrity of 26 percent of the Amazon, and parts of the region are already at a tipping point. It is critical that we work together to amplify the boldest calls and most ambitious commitments to **protect 80 percent of the Amazon by 2025** and avert further climate chaos. We can do it if we take urgent action now!



In solidarity with Indigenous and forest peoples and a growing movement committed to protecting the Amazon, we are working against the clock to secure global commitments at the United Nations climate and biodiversity summits this year to ensure land rights and the permanent protection of millions of acres of Indigenous territories and sensitive areas across the rainforest. This is not an easy task considering the intensifying threats from fires, fossil fuel extraction, legal and illegal mining, land-grabbing, drug trafficking, and violence against Amazon defenders.

In response, we are expanding our international communications and advocacy campaigns to advance and amplify Indigenous rights, resistance, and solutions to protect and defend the Amazon Basin; developing and implementing rapid response protocols and campaigns to Defend Earth Defenders; and building on our longtime work to hold accountable the global drivers of Amazon destruction, including governments, corporations, and their financial backers, as outlined in our 2021-2025 Strategic Plan.

As a growing team of 35 people, and with field teams in Brazil, Peru, and Ecuador, Amazon Watch is fully staffed to work directly with Indigenous and NGO allies in the region and internationally. Our field teams are accompanying Indigenous partners on the front lines of fossil fuel and mining extraction. And, we are now redirecting \$2 million per year in rapid and direct solidarity funding to Indigenous and forest peoples via our Amazon Defenders Fund (ADF), including supporting urgent safety needs for Earth Defenders at risk. This year, up to thirty percent of the ADF budget will support women-led initiatives, as Indigenous women lead calls for healing and justice for women, girls, the Amazon, and Mother Earth.

With so much at stake for the Amazon and climate in the coming months and the next few years, we do not have time to waste on false solutions, including carbon offsets and corporate greenwashing. We are calling for the permanent protection of the Amazon, rights for its defenders, and climate justice. Thank you for taking this urgent stand with us!

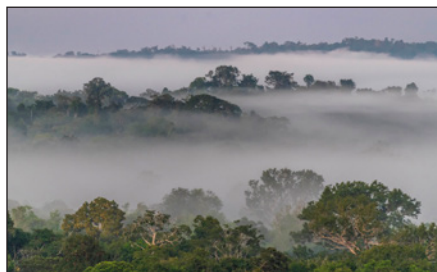
In solidarity and with deep gratitude,

Leila Salazar-López
Executive Director

OUR WORK

Protecting the rainforest and our climate in solidarity with Indigenous peoples

Since 1996, Amazon Watch has worked to protect the rainforest and advance the rights of Indigenous peoples in the Amazon Basin. We partner with Indigenous and environmental organizations in campaigns for human rights, corporate accountability, and the preservation of the Amazon's ecological systems.



Stop Amazon Destruction

Amazon Watch resists destruction of the Amazon rainforest, which is perilously close to passing a tipping point of ecological collapse, by challenging and bringing global media attention to government, corporate, and financial actors complicit in deforestation, resource extraction, land grabs, rights abuses, and disastrous development projects.

Amplify Indigenous-Led Solutions

Amazon Watch amplifies the voices, stories, and solutions of Indigenous peoples to uphold their rights, lives, and territories. Amazon Watch uplifts and invests in Indigenous-led solutions for forest conservation, sustainable livelihoods, and regenerative, local economies.

Advance Climate Justice

Amazon Watch centers the voices and solutions of Indigenous peoples into policies that protect biodiversity and address the global climate crisis. Amazon Watch advocates for principled climate action that includes proposals and solutions from communities on the front lines of the climate crisis – especially Indigenous peoples and people of color – who have historically been excluded due to systemic racism and economic oppression.



MISSION

Amazon Watch is a nonprofit organization founded in 1996 to protect the rainforest and advance the rights of Indigenous peoples in the Amazon Basin. We partner with Indigenous and environmental organizations in campaigns for human rights, corporate accountability, and the preservation of the Amazon's ecological systems.

VISION STATEMENT

We envision a world where the collective rights of Indigenous peoples and the rights of nature are respected; where healthy forests, biodiversity, and the global climate are fully protected.

We strive for a movement of global solidarity rooted in interconnectedness and practices of decolonization to respect the rights of Indigenous peoples and to permanently protect the Amazon rainforest, a vital organ of the Earth's biosphere, which is perilously close to passing a tipping point of ecological collapse.

We believe that Indigenous self-determination is a critical component of any successful conservation strategy for the Amazon, and see that Indigenous knowledge, cultures, and traditional practices are critical to sustainable and equitable stewardship of Mother Earth.

We seek solutions that will lead to the transformation of our economic, financial and political governance systems to ones that are life-affirming and regenerative.

We commit, in the spirit of partnership and mutual respect, to support Indigenous, forest, and traditional peoples in their efforts to protect life, land, and culture in accordance with their aspirations and needs, by advocating for true solutions that respect the principles of climate justice.

This page: Isis Medeiros/Amazon Watch
Previous page (from left): André Dib, Alice Aedy,
Amazon Watch



Photo: André Dib/Amazon Watch



Indigenous peoples in Brazil protest against illegal mining on their territories during the Free Land Camp in Brasília, the largest annual gathering of Indigenous peoples in Brazil. Alessandra Korap Munduruku, along with others, holds a banner that reads "Mining out of Indigenous Lands. Bill 191 No!" Photo: Isis Medeiros/Amazon Watch

Responding to the Amazon Mining Menace under Bolsonaro

By Ana Paula Vargas and Camila Rossi

Under Brazil's Bolsonaro regime, the Amazon has suffered the worst wave of destruction and violence in a generation. The unconstitutional push to open Indigenous lands to industrial and wildcat mining is central to his regime's assault on the Amazon and its peoples and poses an unprecedented threat to Brazil's native peoples and the vast preserved territories they defend.

As the industrial and illegal mining industries ramp up pressure on the Amazon, impacts upon the lives and territories of Indigenous and traditional peoples increase apace: Mining-driven deforestation rose 62 percent in 2021 compared to 2018, the year Bolsonaro was elected, while toxic pollution linked to these activities increasingly poisons communities.

Mining is one of the most lethal activities for environmental defenders worldwide and was responsible for 722 cases of conflict and 17 deaths in 2020 alone.

In response, Amazon Watch has strengthened its work to counter Amazon mining, particularly on Indigenous and protected lands. With advocacy, communications,

and legal action, we're supporting communities on the front lines of mining conflicts as they protect their territories and defend irreplaceable ecosystems. And to challenge the financial backers of Amazon mining companies, we're enacting robust corporate accountability strategies and campaigns.

In February 2022, we launched a report in partnership with the Association of Brazil's Indigenous Peoples (APIB) entitled *Complicity in Destruction IV - How mining companies and international investors drive Indigenous rights violations and threaten the future of the Amazon*.

Our findings, the first compilation of case studies exposing financing for illegal mining interests in the Brazilian Amazon, brought vital data and created channels to build leverage over these actors. We showed that northern financiers poured \$54.1 billion into mining companies with interests in Amazonian Indigenous territories, considered illegal under Brazil's constitution. The report received media coverage in 20 countries.

Beyond its focus on the corporate sector, *Complicity in Destruction IV* (CIDIV) also centered the voices of impacted communities in four short films. In them, the Xikrin do Cateté people related the impacts of Brazilian mining company Vale on their health and way of life, the Kuruyana people and a threatened traditional community sounded the



Illegal mining in Munduruku Indigenous Territory in Pará state, Brazil. Photo: Marizilda Cruppe/Amazonia Real/Amazon Watch

alarm over the menace the Canadian mining company Belo Sun poses to the Xingu river and their families, and the Munduruku affirmed that their territorial monitoring tactics are successful against wildcat miners.

APIB and Brazil's Indigenous movement also used CIDIV to rally opposition to Bill 191, a reckless measure that would open up Indigenous lands to mining and other extractive industries. During the Free Land Camp in April, Brazil's largest gathering of Indigenous peoples where 7,000 representatives gathered

in Brasília, a special edition of the report was printed and distributed to participants, Supreme Court ministers, Brazilian congresspeople, and embassy officials.

Beyond providing pivotal support to campaigns against Amazon mining, our work has also sought to support environmental defenders threatened by industrial mining projects, including Belo Sun's "Volta Grande" project. Working with a coalition, we helped secure an important victory against the company when a high Brazilian court upheld the suspension of its environmental license. Through our work with public defenders we also helped to prevent the forced removal of traditional peoples from Belo Sun's contested mining concession.

To strengthen local resistance, we provided dozens of small grants to community organizations via our Amazon Defenders Fund, enabling increased political organizing and assemblies that helped reinforce residents' right to say no to mining on their territories. And as threats against our partners have increased, so has our emergency response: We've intensified our security protocols to safeguard the lives of Indigenous and community leaders and their families, including enhanced risk assessments and security measures, such as deploying cameras, alarms, and fences, and providing personal security and rapid relocation.

The acute and worsening concerns for the safety of Amazonian environmental defenders – and the mounting power and reach of organized crime – were pushed into stark relief by the murders of Indigenous rights advocate Bruno Pereira and journalist Dom Phillips in the remote Javari Valley in June. We responded to their disappearance by funding search parties and increased security for the local Indigenous organization UNIVAJA. Calling for justice for Dom and Bruno, we accompanied Indigenous lawyer Eliesio Marubo in his visit to Washington, D.C. to meet with policymakers and demand safety for Indigenous peoples and their allies.

The brutal assassination illustrates the need for much-improved local governance, as the Brazilian Amazon grows increasingly lawless and violent. 2022 is a critical year for Brazilian democracy, for Indigenous peoples, for the rainforest, and for our collective future. With the Amazon in crisis, we must maintain and increase our support for threatened communities, while sharpening our focus on corporate accountability. This is why we echo the demands of Brazil's Indigenous movement: "Defend Forest Defenders! Protect the Amazon! Respect Indigenous rights! Get mining out of the Amazon and Indigenous lands!"



Photo: Isis Medeiros/Amazon Watch



An oil spill flows down Chuuntsa Creek in Oil Block 1-AB, in the Peruvian Amazon. Photo: Amazon Watch

Money on Fire: How BlackRock is Driving Climate Chaos in the Amazon and Across the World

By Roshan Krishnan

Amid a year of global climate-change-driven disasters, it has never been clearer that our futures are interdependent. As wildfires and heat waves ravage Europe and floods devastate communities in Kentucky and Bangladesh alike, Indigenous communities in the Amazon fight fossil fuel drilling, deforestation, and mining that threaten their lives and lands. Yet powerful financial institutions like banks and asset managers continue

to finance the extractive companies driving these crises. The world's 60 biggest banks poured over \$4.6 trillion into fossil fuels over the last 6 years, and the world's 30 biggest asset managers currently hold \$550 billion in shares and bonds in fossil fuels.

Those living in the Amazon rainforest feel these impacts heavily. In the Colombian Amazon, Chilean oil company GeoPark is threatening

the Siona people of Buenavista. The company has been accused of stoking paramilitary violence in the area and in recent years acquired the British oil company Amerisur, which had been suspected of dumping waste in local waterways, with adverse health effects for local residents. In Peru, state-owned oil company Petroperú is attempting to work in Block 64 in the Peruvian Amazon. This area is home to the Achuar People and Wampis Nation, Indigenous communities who have fiercely opposed oil extraction for decades, in large part due to repeated oil spills from pipelines running through their territories.

What is the common thread between these two companies? They both receive significant investments from the world's largest asset manager, BlackRock. According to Amazon Watch's latest research, in 2021 BlackRock held over \$160 million in bonds of Petroperú, and over \$10 million in bonds and shares of GeoPark. Powerful financial institutions like BlackRock continue to pour billions of dollars into extractive companies that threaten Indigenous communities, all while investing in false solutions like carbon offsets in order to "green" their reputations. The fact of the matter is, destruction of the biosphere is a lucrative endeavor!

Amazon Watch is pushing back. We are alerting financial regulatory institutions to recognize GeoPark's misleading claims about



Achuar protest vs. Petroperú in Block 64. Photo: Amazon Watch

respecting local communities and the environment, and we are pressuring regulators to discourage investors from investing in the company. Meanwhile, together with Indigenous partners from the Peruvian Amazon, we are pressuring BlackRock's leadership to adopt an Indigenous rights policy and stop investing in fossil fuel companies. And earlier this year, we released *A LEAF Out of an Old Book*, a report about the dangerous new carbon offsetting program that corporate greenwashers, including BlackRock, have thrown money at while continuing to invest in ecological and social devastation.

We will continue to work with our partners and allies against all of the banks and asset managers that invest in the destruction of the Amazon and

violation of the rights of Indigenous peoples, while building connections with the broader global climate justice movement. In the immediate future, our goals are simple: financial institutions must be pressured to adopt binding Indigenous rights policies and get out of financing oil and gas. Our partners in the Amazon need an immediate halt to the extractive industries threatening their lives and lands, and this will be a first step. To truly drive a just transition, however, we will have to go further. These financial giants must be reined in, and institutions in the U.S. and across the Global North must provide reparative funding for Indigenous peoples, forest protection, and climate adaptation and mitigation in the Amazon and beyond.



OCP Pipeline rupture, Ecuadorian Amazon, 2022. Photo: Mauricio Rosenfeld/Amazon Watch

The Amazon Crude Commodity Chain: New Avenues for Accountability

By Kevin Koenig

As oil spills, deforestation, and rights violations continued unabated in Ecuador's Amazon and profiteers pushed deeper into the forest in search of new reserves, Indigenous peoples on the front lines of extraction were looking for new leverage to hold the government and oil companies – the majority state-run or independent, small producers – to account. Amazon Watch turned its attention to previously unexamined yet crucial

actors in the oil supply chain: the consumers and the financiers. Where was the Amazonian oil exported from Ecuador going? Who was using it? And who was bankrolling it?

In collaboration with Stand.earth, we released the *Linked Fates* report in December 2021 that, shockingly, shows California is the world's largest consumer of oil from the Amazon rainforest. Ecuador is the number one source of foreign oil for the Golden State – more than the world's second-largest producer, Saudi Arabia. Despite California's progressive image and leaders, this research shows the state consumes 50 percent of all oil produced in the Amazon, of which 89 percent comes from Ecuador. In fact, 1 in 9 gallons pumped on average in California comes from the Amazon, and in

Southern California, the average is 1 in 7 gallons. Much of this fuel is also consumed by airports, corporations such as Amazon.com, trucking fleets such as PepsiCo, and retail gas giants such as Costco.

The report received groundbreaking exclusive coverage from NBC, drawing the world's attention to some of the first wells being drilled in the remote part of Yasuní National Park, a UNESCO Biosphere reserve and one of the most biodiverse places on the planet. Yasuní is also home to some of Ecuador's last Indigenous peoples living in isolation, the Tagaeri and Taromenane.

“Oil extraction in our Ecuadorian Amazon has brought pollution, diseases, deforestation, destruction of our cultures, and the colonization of our territories. It is an existential threat to us, and it violates our fundamental rights as Indigenous peoples. We call for an end to all new extraction in our territories and, as our ancestors and now science claim, we must keep fossil fuels in the ground, in accordance with the commitments of the Paris Agreement,” explains Nemo Andy Guiquita, Waorani Indigenous leader of Women and Health of CONFENIAE (Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of the Ecuadorian Amazon).

The report and ensuing coverage roiled the administration of California

Governor Gavin Newsom, whose bona fides as a climate leader are now under question given the state's dependence on oil sourced from old growth Amazon rainforest without the consent of Indigenous peoples. Pressure on his administration escalated when Indigenous leaders from Ecuador's Amazon traveled to the Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles in June 2022, calling to end the state's complicity in destruction. Activists deployed two giant banners urging Newsom to take action to reduce California's imports of Amazon crude and also calling on Ecuadorian President Guillermo Lasso to end new extraction.

We were also able to expose the shadowy world of oil trading, a critical part of the Amazon oil commodity chain. Our 2020 report with Stand.earth identified the top six European banks responsible for 85 percent of the trade of Amazon oil. Our engagement with the banks following that report led to several commitments to stop the financing of trade of Ecuadorian crude, and French bank BNP Paribas committed to ending almost all new financing for Amazon oil production.

In practice, these bank commitments are a major obstacle to government plans to expand extraction. They dried up the majority of traditional financing for the sale of Amazon crude from Ecuador, severely restricting the financial options of



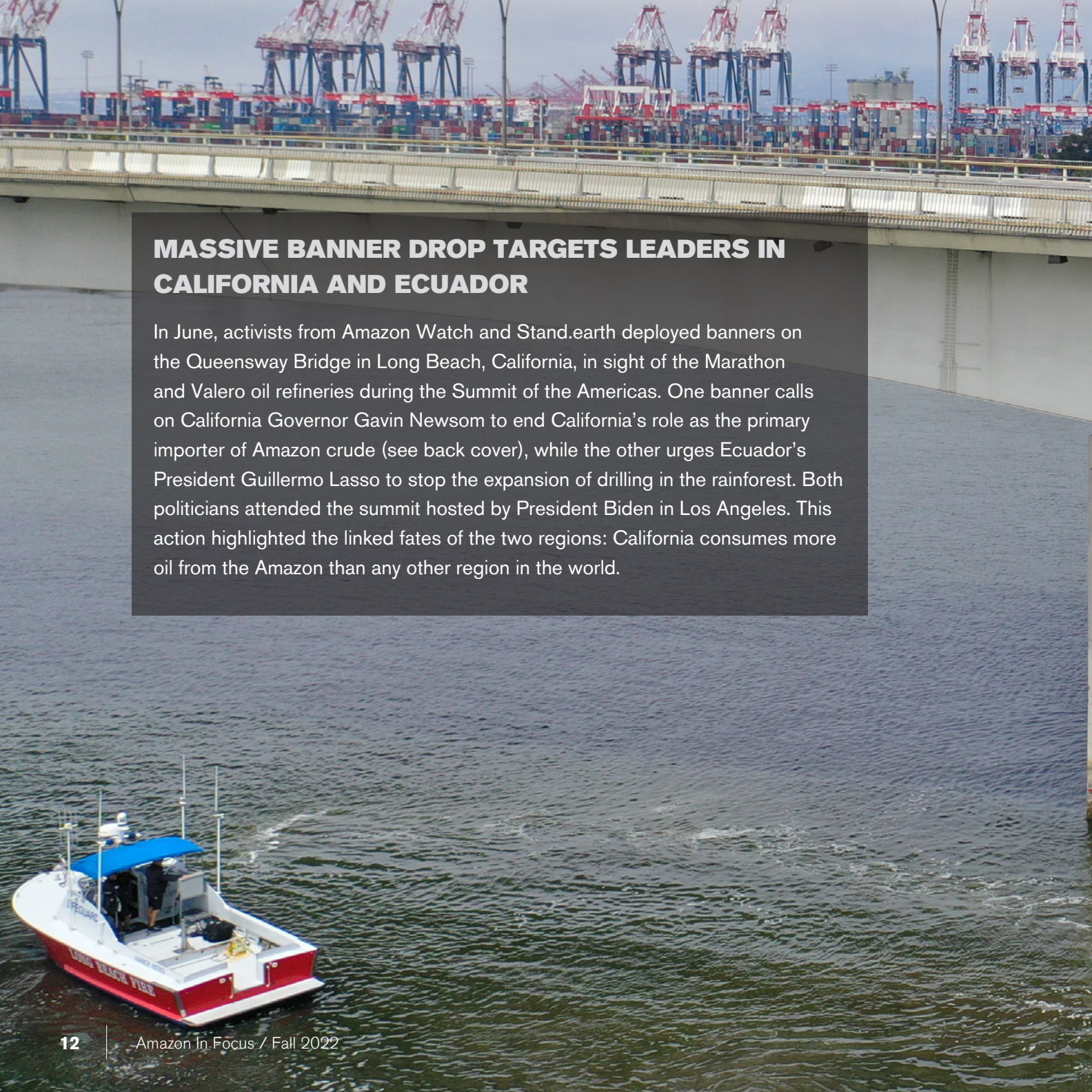
Nemo Andy Guiquita at Summit of the Americas rally and vigil, June 6, 2022. Photo: Isabel Avila/Amazon Watch

state-run company Petroecuador to get its environmentally and socially destructive product to market.

The commitments received major media coverage in Ecuador and forced the government to lobby to get the banks to reconsider, to no avail. Left with few options, Petroecuador was forced to take the unprecedented step of modifying the terms and conditions of oil sales to help buyers obtain lines of credit from a dwindling pool of banks – a move more common when a country faces economic sanctions. According to a Petroecuador statement, “This measure was taken because of the difficulty in obtaining letters of credit from some international entities, as a result of restrictions on the sale of crude extracted from the Ecuadorian Amazon.”


Meanwhile, an 18-day national strike in June 2022 led by CONAIE, Ecuador's national Indigenous confederation, over cost of living increases and government plans to expand extraction, forced Lasso to rescind Decree 95, which would have paved the way for increasing oil production and exploration.

These market and finance strategies have created new advocacy opportunities to build leverage and power on some of the critical players in the complex commodity chain of Amazon crude. Combined with on-the-ground action from Indigenous peoples, they are a powerful tool in creating accountability and working to keep fossil fuels in the ground.



MASSIVE BANNER DROP TARGETS LEADERS IN CALIFORNIA AND ECUADOR

In June, activists from Amazon Watch and Stand.earth deployed banners on the Queensway Bridge in Long Beach, California, in sight of the Marathon and Valero oil refineries during the Summit of the Americas. One banner calls on California Governor Gavin Newsom to end California's role as the primary importer of Amazon crude (see back cover), while the other urges Ecuador's President Guillermo Lasso to stop the expansion of drilling in the rainforest. Both politicians attended the summit hosted by President Biden in Los Angeles. This action highlighted the linked fates of the two regions: California consumes more oil from the Amazon than any other region in the world.



**LASSO
PROTEJA
LA AMAZONÍA
NO MÁS CRUDO
DE LA SELVA**

Photo: Amazon Watch/Stand.earth



Photo: Natura Foundation (Fundación Natura) 2022

Mar-Amazonía: An Alliance for Good Living

By Vladimir Pinto

In the Peruvian Amazon, the oil and gas industry has brought constant contamination and abuse to the Indigenous peoples living there. Oil activities, beginning in 1970, were carried out without respect for the territorial rights of local peoples and allowed polluted waters to be discharged directly into Amazonian rivers. Today, the industry still harms the biodiversity, health, water, and life throughout the rainforest with constant spills, unsolved environmental liabilities, and elevated levels of heavy metals found in the blood of local residents.

For over 15 years, Amazon Watch has supported Peruvian Indigenous communities in denouncing these environmental damages and demanding solutions for the contamination of their water and soil. This struggle, initiated in the 1990s by the Achuar people of the Corrientes River, has had some victories, empowering local leaders to regain control of their territory. The resistance has encouraged other inhabitants to organize themselves, demand cleanup, and reject new oil activities in the Amazon.

A similar scenario is underway on the Peruvian coast: The country's first oil well was established in the Tumbes region in 1863, and spread to other coastal provinces. In 1969, with the creation of state-owned oil company Petroperú, greater offshore extraction kickstarted a

distressing history of marine soil contamination. Today, this region has the largest concentration of contaminated sites. The Peruvian government has failed to supervise companies operating there, leading to constant oil spills, gas emissions into the ocean, and the dangerous contamination of marine species. Coastal communities, which consume fish exposed to spills, feel the negative impacts.

In short, Indigenous peoples of the Amazon and fishing communities of the coast face similar harms from oil activity. They are united by pollution problems, the criminalization of their demands for ecological restoration after years of oil spills, and their rejection of the government's efforts to establish Petroperú as the major operator of most of the country's oil blocks. Petroperú is operating Block 1 on the Peruvian coast and has the license to operate Blocks 192 and 64 in the Amazon. In addition, the Peruvian government is pushing for other oil blocks to be operated by Petroperú – several located on the coast and one in the rainforest – as soon as the current operators' contracts expire.

Artisanal fishing organizations have called for an energy transition away from fossil fuels and requested that the Peruvian government not grant more oil concessions or extend the term of activities in oil blocks where operators' contracts are set to expire. And Amazonian organizations have experience working on autonomous

environmental inspection and environmental remediation.

This is why both the fishing communities of the coast and Indigenous peoples of the Amazon are uniting to resist short-term extraction based on the commodification of nature, which destroys biodiversity and impacts ancient cultures.

This year, Amazon Watch collaborated with the Natura Foundation (Fundación Natura) and PUINAMUDT (Amazonian Indigenous Peoples United in Defense of their Territories) to support the first-ever meeting of this nascent coalition, dubbed "Mar-Amazonía" (Sea-Amazon).

In March of 2022, organizations from the northern coastal zone and the northern Amazon region met to share information, as well as to train local leaders in environmental monitoring. Participants created a common agenda aimed at dealing with oil spills and advocating against harmful energy policies and formed the Mar-Amazonía Alliance, demanding from the Peruvian government and oil companies:

- *Free, Prior, and Informed Consent in advance of any hydrocarbon exploration or exploitation concession activity.*
- *Prohibition of exploration and exploitation concessions in areas of high biodiversity and in areas with territorial rights protection.*



Photo: André Dib/Amazon Watch

- *Remediation and comprehensive clean-up of the territories affected by extractive activities – now!*
- *No more oil exploration and exploitation blocks in the territorial sea or in any new area of the Amazon.*
- *Immediate, integral, and intercultural health care for populations affected by extractive and industrial activities.*
- *Urgently initiate a popular and Indigenous-led process of energy transition with respect for local autonomy and rights.*

The alliance constitutes the beginning of a process to unite communities negatively impacted by the oil industry across the country. The demands also lay the foundation for proposing policy reforms to promote an energy transition away from oil extraction in Peru.

In times of rising fuel prices, it is critical that the alliance's message reaches the international financial community. Financiers continue to invest in and make loans to companies such as Petroperú, and they are tilting the balance in favor of extractivism in Indigenous territories.

The Peruvian government is aligned with the corporate interests of Citibank, Goldman Sachs, and Deutsche Bank, among others, to revitalize Peru's oil industry. Meanwhile, the same industry has yet to remediate the severe environmental damage it has already caused. The challenge will be for communities to remain united despite this.

Mar-Amazonía has to be an alliance for *buen vivir*, or "good living," not only for the fisherfolk of the sea and rivers, but for all humanity.

Colombia Is the World's Deadliest Place for Environmentalists

By Blanca Lucía Echeverry and Andrew Miller | Nov. 18, 2021

At the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow, President Iván Duque of Colombia carried out a charm offensive to convince the world he is an environmental champion who would protect his nation's vast forests. He promised Colombia would be carbon neutral by 2050 and that, by next year, 30 percent of the country's land and waters would be protected areas.

But back in Colombia, armed gangs are threatening and murdering community leaders and environmental activists who have been trying to protect Colombia's forest from destruction by mining, lumber and oil companies. Morbidly, Colombia has emerged as the world's deadliest place for environmentalists and others defending land rights. Global Witness documented at least 65 killings in 2020.

In the Putumayo region, members of the Border Command, an

illegal armed group dedicated to controlling drug production along the border with Ecuador, told residents that they have negotiated with Nueva Amerisur, owned by the multinational oil company GeoPark, to ensure that the company's work would not be impeded and warned the residents not to interfere. The criminal enterprise declared the environmental defender and Amnesty International priority case Jani Silva to be persona non grata. Facing the threat of assassination for her work to protect the water sources and forest from oil exploration, she has been forced to continually move to escape these killers.

Such attacks and threats are rising as deforestation in the Colombian Amazon has surged, surpassing 250,000 acres in three of the last four years. Rainforest sheltering a spectacular biodiversity is being razed for cattle ranching and corporate farms, oil palm production, fossil fuel extraction, illegal gold mining

and logging. Leaders of local communities, whose water is being poisoned and whose land has been devastated, have provided the last line of defense against this destruction by organizing and bringing attention to the problem through legal action and publicity campaigns.

Mr. Duque has done little to protect them or to pursue and prosecute their attackers. The National Protection Unit, created in 2011 to protect human rights defenders, has in Ms. Silva's case provided transportation support and, when pressured, some police presence. Though civilian and military authorities claim to be pursuing and disarming illegal armed groups, as pledged under the 2016 peace accords ending a five-decade internal armed conflict with leftist guerrillas, organizations like the Border Command continue to flourish in the Amazon and elsewhere.

Mr. Duque grudgingly signed a regional environmental convention called the Escazú Agreement, which

would oblige the government to protect environmental defenders. But he has shown little urgency in getting Congress to ratify the pact, as cattle, mining and infrastructure industries have mounted a disinformation campaign against it.

Colombia's illegal armed groups have been able to operate so brazenly, in part, because Mr. Duque has effectively abandoned the peace accord signed by his predecessor. His government has undermined the Special Justice for Peace, established to prosecute those responsible for human rights crimes committed during the conflict, and has neglected the commission that was to prosecute and break up the organizations behind attacks against human rights defenders. Colombia's paramilitaries — precursors to many of the illegal armed groups operating today — committed the vast majority of civilian killings during the country's bloody internal conflict.

Mr. Duque used the recent arrest of a high-level drug trafficker, Dairo Antonio Úsuga, known as Otoniel, as an opportunity to claim a victory against the illegal groups responsible for attacking environmentalists. Colombia's experience since the killing of Pablo Escobar, however,

cautions against predictions that the decapitation of a powerful cartel will diminish the drug trade or related violence in the long run.

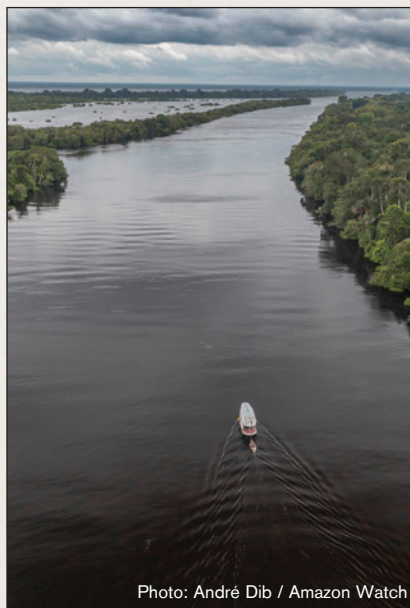


Photo: André Dib / Amazon Watch

If Mr. Duque truly wants to be the environmental champion he claims, he needs to invest political capital to ensure congressional ratification of the Escazú Agreement, designating the process as urgent, which would force the Congress to not let the agreement languish, as is currently happening. Additionally, he should push for political support and

funding for the Special Justice for Peace and the security commission.

Biden administration officials have recognized the importance of environmental defenders, and earlier this month at the climate conference in Glasgow they unveiled a Plan to Conserve Global Forests. But the plan would not be nearly aggressive enough to fight the epidemic of violence facing forest defenders. The U.S. government should revise this strategy to explicitly include protection of environmental defenders as a core objective. Concrete measures should include speaking out publicly when defenders are at risk and imposing sanctions against specific perpetrators, as a group of U.S. lawmakers recently urged.

Jani Silva's situation is likely to remain precarious. Concrete actions by Colombian and U.S. government officials, however, could send a strong message that she and other environmental defenders have powerful allies who will leverage their influence to end the scourge of threats, attacks and killings against those who protect the earth for us all.

A version of this op-ed appeared in print in November 2021 in The International New York Times.



Photo: Casa Mujeres Amazónicas

Weaving a Tapestry of Activism in the Amazon, with Solidarity Grants

By Angela Martínez

The activist-led Amazon Defenders Fund (ADF) forges a bond of solidarity between Amazon Watch and our Amazonian partners and allies, and contributes to the woven tapestry of direct actions in their territories.

Our ADF grants address urgent security needs for Earth Defenders at risk and channel resources to Indigenous leaders, communities, and organizations, as well as to traditional communities, allied

nonprofits, and social movements. This rapid solidarity grantmaking goes to organizational and legal support, Indigenous-led communications, travel, and mobilizations, as well as to small-scale local Indigenous economic initiatives.

From July 2021 to June 2022, the ADF doubled its previous mobilization of direct, timely, and secure solidarity funding to local organizations in the Amazon. Today, the fund redirects \$2 million per year to Indigenous and forest peoples, respecting their holistic, interrelated, and reciprocal cosmovision and their processes of self-determination, autonomy, Indigenous rights, and territorial integrity.

We are proud to have a part in efforts to unite women across the Amazon, including with the National

Association of Ancestral Indigenous Women Warriors (ANMIGA) in Brazil and *Mujeres Amazónicas*, a collective of Women Defenders of the Ecuadorian Amazon, who work tirelessly to restore hope and balance back to the rainforest.

Emerging Women's Leadership, from Territorial Defense to Political Changemaking

In October 2021, the women's leadership of the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon River Basin (COICA) carried out its first Women's Summit in Colombia – with solidarity funds from ADF – in an effort to advance the movement to dismantle patriarchy in an Amazonian context. The resulting

declaration from the summit, entitled *"Indigenous Amazonian Women mobilizing for the protection of our greatest home: the Amazon"* represented the deliberations and reflections of the leadership of 511 Amazonian peoples. The declaration decreed the creation of an Amazonian Women's Fund, the formation of a Women Defenders of Amazonian Territories Network, and the establishment of a Colombian Amazon Women's Movement, while demanding the equal participation and decision making of women in all COICA spaces, including in its member organizations, both locally and internationally.

Forms of Resistance and Revitalization

Ecuador's *Mujeres Amazónicas* strives to challenge, expose, and address all forms of violence against Amazonian women. Employing various strategies, *Mujeres Amazónicas* centers the priorities of women enduring the negative impacts caused by the exploitation and expropriation of their body-territory and the Earth we share.

"Indigenous women are holders of ancestral knowledge and the carriers of language and our culture. We defend our territories and families. But gender-based violence against Amazonian women continues to be overlooked in Indigenous communities and by the rest of society. Women who decide to leave the violence have little or no economic, legal, or emotional support. Extractive violence

against the land and Indigenous women's bodies go hand in hand. We think that healing women also heals the Earth." - *Mujeres Amazónicas*

Mujeres Amazónicas has forged a unique healing process by holding "Healing Circles," spaces where Indigenous women who have experienced violence can meet others and heal collectively and individually. This process enables the creation of solidarity networks as a practice to recover and develop individual and community capacities and resources. As Guatemalan Maya K'iche' scholar Gladys Tzul Tzul has said, "the will to live" is "the political energy that Indigenous women produce to preserve memory and defend the land." In 2022, ADF backed *Mujeres Amazónicas* with rapid funds for the opening of a physical space in which Healing Circles can be held.

Brazil's Free Land Camp: Transforming Horizons Along Diverse Paths and Directions

ADF worked with partners in Brazil to enable the travel of several Amazonian delegations to the annual gathering of Brazil's Indigenous movement, the Free Land Camp, or *Acampamento Terra Livre* (ATL). The largest gathering in its history, 2022's ATL convened 7,000 Indigenous representatives from across the country in Brasília. During a week of activities, participants centered Indigenous voices and cultures while confronting the forces

undermining their rights and making the movement's demands heard. In powerful actions, they protested the current legislative assault on Indigenous land rights, including Bill 191, which aims to open native lands to mining and commercial exploitation, and Bill 490, a land-grabbing scheme that would alter the demarcation of Indigenous territories. They also decried the explosion of illegal gold mining on Amazonian Indigenous lands. The ATL brought solutions to the table as well as important non-Indigenous voices, including former Brazilian president Lula da Silva, who committed to supporting the Amazonian Indigenous movement's agenda.

"Keep walking, sharing, and learning in unity, and above all, recognizing the great strength of our diversity"

- COICA Women's Leadership Declaration, October 2021

While Amazon Watch has maintained a regranteeing fund over its 26-year history, today's Amazon Defenders Fund eclipses our previous ability to mobilize solidarity funding to our partners and allies on the ground. This comes at a critical moment, as the Amazon and its peoples suffer an unprecedented assault, requiring new levels of support to resist mounting threats and back much-needed solutions that keep the rainforest standing and its defenders safe.

Accompanying Threatened Defenders of the Amazon

By Andrew E. Miller

The killing of Bruno Pereira and Dom Phillips following their June 2022 disappearance deep in the Brazilian Amazon shocked the conscience of the world. The violent act sent a message: No one is safe if mafia groups can get away with killing an international journalist and a beloved activist for Indigenous peoples' rights. Outrageously, Bruno and Dom have joined a long list of environmental martyrs killed for their defense of the Amazon rainforest.

For environmental defenders of different stripes, Latin America is the world's most dangerous region. Amazonian countries figure prominently in the annual Global Witness survey tracking the killings of environmental activists across the globe. Sixty-five environmental and land defenders were killed in Colombia in 2020 according to Global Witness's 2021 survey, along with 20 in Brazil and six in Peru.

For over 25 years, Amazon Watch has supported Indigenous and other grassroots movements defending themselves against collective threats from oil companies and megaprojects. As Amazonian partners are facing



Eliesio Marubo with Representative Jim McGovern. Photo: Diana Ruiz/Greenpeace USA

more targeted threats, including death threats or legal persecution against high-profile leaders, we are dedicating additional resources in support of protection strategies.

The Amazon Defenders Fund (ADF) is a crucial tool for urgent response. Emergency grants have financed communications technology and – as a last resort – relocation away from the threats. The ADF also supports medium-term collective protection strategies like equipment

and training for Indigenous guards and legal defense.

Communications and advocacy support, when requested by our partners, can be equally important. Depending on an analysis of what the risks are and where they are coming from, we work with threatened leaders to deploy actions to raise their profile and pressure the aggressors.

Eliesio Marubo, an Indigenous lawyer for the group UNIVAJA, is a leader in the global campaign for



Kanamari People of the Javari Valley, Brazil. Photo: Bruno Kelly/Amazonia Real

justice in the killing of Bruno and Dom. To support the campaign, we coordinated a week-long advocacy visit to Washington, D.C. alongside Greenpeace and the Due Process of Law Foundation. Eliesio met with several congressional representatives, the State Department, and the Secretary General of the Organization of American States. The trip resulted in media articles in prominent Brazilian newspapers, international media coverage, and a solidarity letter

signed by 23 members of the U.S. Congress.

Beyond the Brazilian Amazon, we are expanding accompaniment for Earth Defenders from around the Amazon. In Colombia, we were privileged in late 2021 to feature threatened defender Jani Silva in a guest opinion column published in the New York Times. Earlier this year, we visited Jani as she returned to her community in Amazonian rainforests of Putumayo,

to strengthen the community-based movement to resist the entry of the oil company GeoPark and counter efforts to recruit community youth into illegal drug mafias.

We will continue to support the #JusticeForDomAndBruno campaign while also working to support threatened partners across the Amazon as they work to protect their communities, often at great risk to themselves.



Anti-Chevron Day 2022, Richmond, California. Photo: Arthur Koch/Amazon Watch

Taking on Chevron from Richmond to Ecuador

By Paul Paz y Miño

Ten years ago, on August 6, 2012, the Chevron-Richmond refinery exploded, releasing a plume of toxic smoke and sending 15,000 local residents to the hospital. On the anniversary of this disaster, Amazon Watch joined the Richmond community for a march to the refinery

gates in solidarity with the millions of people Chevron has harmed around the globe. This solidarity continues to be of the utmost importance, because Chevron continues to relentlessly target and harass its critics and the victims of its environmental and human rights crimes around the world.

Since the publishing of our last *Amazon In Focus*, human rights attorney Steven Donziger, key lawyer in the historic Ecuadorian court decision against Chevron in 2011, was tried and convicted of criminal

contempt of court. He spent 45 days in prison and more than two and a half years on house arrest. Donziger was actually prosecuted by Chevron and has the distinction of being the only lawyer in U.S. history prosecuted by a private firm – one with direct ties to his corporate adversary – for criminal charges. While Donziger is now free from house arrest, his fight, and the fight for justice in Ecuador, are far from over. His was the first corporate criminal prosecution in U.S. history.

Steven Donziger has been disbarred

in New York. His passport has not been returned, his bank accounts are still frozen, and Chevron is still seeking access to his computer, cell phone, and email. Chevron succeeded in criminalizing one of its most effective critics, but it remains on the hook for \$9.5 billion it owes to communities in Ecuador for poisoning the Amazon rainforest by deliberately dumping at least 16 billion gallons of toxic oil waste when it operated there as Texaco from 1964-1992.

In May, not long after Donziger was freed, he traveled to Richmond to participate in the 9th annual Global Anti-Chevron Day. Standing outside Chevron's Richmond refinery in front of a fresh mural decrying the oil giant's corporate greed, Donziger spoke to a welcoming crowd. It was an emotional moment, celebrating his freedom – finally! – amid ongoing injustice. Though Donziger is better off than those forced to drink Chevron's contaminated water in Ecuador, or breathe the toxic fumes in Richmond, his ability to fight for the rights of Chevron's victims, and that of any lawyer in the U.S. challenging the fossil fuel industry, is at extreme risk.

Chevron's successful targeting and criminalization of Donziger with the complicity of the U.S. judicial system and executive branch must not be ignored.



Steven Donziger speaking at Anti-Chevron Day 2022 in Richmond. Photo: Yeymi Perez/Amazon Watch

As Annie Leonard, Co-Executive Director of Greenpeace USA, said after Donziger's sentencing:

"It is emblematic of the larger trend of silencing activists, many of whom are fighting for the solutions desperately needed to combat the global climate crisis exacerbated by multinational fossil fuel companies. Chevron's legal attack on Donziger is not the first, nor will it be the last case of its kind. Right now, the right to dissent is being repressed by both our government and corporations. Donziger's fate could have lasting effects on environmental and corporate accountability activists, against whom threats and legal harassment are already escalating."

Donziger should have his conviction overturned, and Chevron should be held to account not only for its actions in the Amazon, but its subsequent attacks against its own victims and their advocates who have been seeking justice and a clean environment for over thirty years. Any hope of accountability and climate justice for the people of Ecuador, Richmond, or the many other communities impacted by Chevron's legacy of destruction around the globe, hangs in the balance. With new allies in Congress and around the globe, this epic fight for justice wages on.

In Memoriam

Jonas Minton

Amazon Watch mourns the passing of longtime board member and supporter Jonas Minton. Jonas is survived by his wife of 42 years, Julie Carrasco-Minton, as well as many siblings, nieces, and nephews. Jonas, who served on the board of Amazon Watch from 2005-2017, passed away at the age of 73. He was a dedicated, passionate, and active leader at Amazon Watch for many years, helping to guide our organization through critical stages of development and growth.

In addition to his 33 years serving in California's Department of Water Resources, Jonas was an iconic leader in California's water conservation movement. He helped to secure protection for 1,200 miles of California rivers, leading to the first major dam removal in state history. In his final months, Jonas successfully pushed for California to adopt water policies that take climate change into account.



Most importantly, Jonas was an ally, colleague, devoted and loving husband, and friend to many. Always smiling and spreading his warmth and compassion, Jonas was a mentor to young environmental advocates, including Amazon Watch Founder and Board President Atossa Soltani. He guided and mentored many of us for more than two decades. Atossa Soltani said: "Jonas was my greatest mentor since the age of 23 and practically

delivered me to my destiny as a rainforest activist in 1990. He coached me through many stages of my career."

Among the many pieces of wisdom Jonas imparted were:

"Be good to the Earth, be good to each other, be good to yourself and be sure to have a little fun too!"

"You may be on the opposite side of policy, but not on the opposite side of the person. Every relationship is important."

Jonas was described as a "spiritual water policy guru." He showed us how to go with the flow, like the downstream flow of a river. He will be deeply missed. His legacy lives on in many wonderful ways.

Daniela Alejandra Yépez Jácome

This year Amazon Watch lost a friend and former colleague with the passing of Alejandra Yépez.

Alejandra was a defender of rights and Indigenous peoples with unparalleled commitment and dedication. She always gave 100 percent of her heart, time, and effort on behalf of the struggle for human rights. She was a defender not only of life, but nature and cultures. And she brought this spirit to her work as Ecuador Communications Advisor at Amazon Watch.

Alejandra was loved by her family and friends and profoundly loving towards them. She always extended a helping hand to anyone who needed it. She was a person of deep emotion and tenderness.

We express our deepest condolences to her family and all who knew her and worked with her.



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