**CHEVRON VS STEVEN DONZIGER, ESQ.**

**AND THE LEGAL SYSTEM OF ECUADOR**

**We, the undersigned, support Steven Donziger and and the Indigenous peoples and local communities in Ecuador in their decades-long work to achieve environmental justice over pollution caused by Chevron. We call for a judicial remedy for the legal attacks orchestrated by Chevron against Donziger and for the defamation of his character.**

For as long as people have defended the environment, they have often faced great personal risk. In recent years, multifaceted attacks against environmental defenders have only grown. These include physical assaults and murder, defamation campaigns, digital security threats, and corporate abuse of the judicial system.

One of the most egregious cases of judicial harassment and defamation involves Chevron’s legal assault on Steven Donziger and his Ecuadorian colleagues.

From 1964 to 1990, Texaco knowingly and willfully polluted the Ecuadorian Amazon. During that period, the oil company deliberately dumped over 16 billion gallons of toxic wastewater, spilled approximately 17 million gallons of crude oil and left hazardous waste in hundreds of open pits it had dug in the forest floor. When Chevron agreed to purchase Texaco in 2000, it also became owner of “the Amazon Chernobyl” created by that company.

In a 1993 suit against the company, some 30,000 indigenous people and campesino farmers sought restitution from Chevron. Fearing a jury trial in the US, Chevron petitioned that the case be heard in Ecuador. Contrary to its expectations, Chevron was found guilty in the case in 2011 and in all appeals up to the Supreme Court of the country, which upheld the previous judgments in 2013. Chevron was ordered to pay $9.5 billion to clean up its mess.

Rather than do so, Chevron sold its Ecuadorian assets, fled the country and began a high-powered attack against the victims along with one of their attorneys, Steven Donziger. Hiring 2,000 lawyers, including the “rescue squad” firm of Gibson Dunn, as well as public relations firms, it vowed to torture the victim communities with a “lifetime of litigation” and to fight the judgment “until Hell freezes over, and then fight it out on the ice.”

In the case of attorney Donziger, who refused to give up the fight to see justice done on behalf of the Amazonian victims, Chevron and its pro-corporate judicial ally US District Judge Lewis A. Kaplan manufactured “contempt” charges against him, largely because he refuses to comply with Kaplan’s stunning order that Chevron be allowed to access all of his confidential client communications on his computer and phone. According to one of its PR firms, Chevron’s long-term strategy is to “demonize Donziger.”

For this misdemeanor charge of contempt, Donziger has now been put under pre-trial house arrest for an unheard of and unprecedented four months — far longer than the longest sentence ever imposed on a New York lawyer for contempt — and finds himself and his family nearly destitute in fighting Chevron.

The company, worth over $200 billion, has already spent some $2 billion fighting the Ecuadorian judgment. The point is not, then, the value of the judgment; the point for Chevron is to intimidate and crush those who seek justice and compensation for the degradation of their environments by the company. But to read “The Chevron Way” on its website, one would think it was reading about a different company entirely.

One of the values espoused in **Chevron’s “Way**” says: “Our company's foundation is built on our values, which distinguish us and guide our actions to deliver results. We conduct our business in a socially and environmentally responsible manner, respecting the law and universal human rights to benefit the communities where we work.”

Clearly said, these words are not indicative of their values and have nothing to do with Chevron’s treatment of the tens of thousands of Ecuadorians living in its toxic mess, nor with the lawyer seeking to protect the rights of those people to live in a clean environment.

Environmental activism in many countries results in murder. Chevron’s strategy is death by a thousand cuts through the manipulation of a legal system it has managed to stack in its favor in order to intiminate and disempower the victims of its pollution and a lawyer who works on their behalf.

As Greta Thunberg and the millions around the world protesting with her seek to raise awareness about the state of the planet and demand their right to live in a world with an environmentally sound future, we must also stand with and speak out for those leading struggles on the front lines.

**We call on everyone fighting to save our planet to join with us in raising awareness about and support for the Ecuadorian plaintiffs and their attorney, Steven Donzige**r.

**Please urgently contact** Chevron’s Chair of the Board and CEO, **Michael K. Wirth, Chevron Corporation,** **6001 Bollinger Canyon Road San Ramon, CA 94583-2324. Tel: 1-925 842 3232.**

**Please urgently contact** the US Department of Justice calling for a transparent investigation into Chevron’s actions since the judgment against it and the actions taken by Chevron and Judge Kaplan to demonize and silence Steven Donziger: **Robert Zink, Chief, Fraud Section, U.S. Department of Justice, 950 Pennsylvania Ave. NW 20530, Phone: 1-202-514-2000**.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*