April XX, 2021

The Honorable Merrick Garland

Attorney General of the United States

U.S. Department of Justice

950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland,

We Nobel Prize laureates representing all disciplines are writing you now in support of the April xx letter from Members of Congress requesting that you immediately order a high-level Department of Justice review of an unorthodox case involving human rights lawyer Steven Donziger and that the Department reassert main jurisdiction over the case and conduct a review of the apparently baseless charges against him. We also are deeply disturbed to learn that the case against Mr. Donziger is being prosecuted by a private law firm that has a client relationship with Chevron, the company against whom Mr. Donziger helped win a large pollution judgement in Ecuador. This appears to be a flagrant conflict of interest and inconsistent with rule-of-law requirements.

Mr. Donziger has now been under pre-trial house arrest in Manhattan for over 600 days and counting while awaiting trial on a petty misdemeanor charge resulting largely from a discovery dispute in the case of the United States v. Donziger, U.S. District Court S.D.N.Y Case No. 19 Cr. 561 (LAP); 11 Civ. 691 (LAK). The current date of his contempt of court trial, which has changed several times over the 600+ days of his house arrest, is May 10 in the Southern District of New York. Mr. Donziger’s lawyers assert he is the only lawyer ever held pre-trial in the United States on a misdemeanor case of any sort, where the longest sentence possible even if convicted is 180 days and where the longest sentence ever imposed for a contempt charge on a lawyer in New York is 90 days of home confinement. (Mr. Donziger already has “served” more than seven times that maximum sentence and has not had a trial.)

In November of 2020, 55 Nobels released a [public statement](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ac2615b8f5130fda4340fcb/t/5fa4ed0489af311328315381/1604644102865/2020-10-04-55-nobel-laureates-statement.pdf) in support of Mr. Donziger and at that time called for his release from house arrest, dismissal of the charges against him, the cessation of judicial harassment of him and assurances that any further legal actions against him be assigned to a neutral and unbiased judge. We believed then, as we do now, that as the letter to you from Members of Congress says, the harassment of Donziger “involves a shameful attempt by Chevron, a multinational fossil fuel polluter, to manipulate and abuse the federal courts to silence, punish, and intimidate the defendant… because of his successful class action lawsuit in Ecuador which resulted in a $9.5 billion judgement against Chevron on behalf of the Indigenous people of the Amazon basin who have been subjected to deadly, carcinogenic waste from oil and gas production in one of the world’s most fragile and irreplaceable regions.”

As we have stated before, we have a deep and abiding interest in peace and justice, in upholding our international system for the protection of human rights, and in protecting the environment. We do not believe that fairness and justice will be served unless the Department of Justice reviews the judicial procedures involved in this unorthodox case, reasserts jurisdiction so the prosecution is not linked to a private oil company that has targeted Mr. Donziger for years, and conducts a thorough review of the highly questionable circumstances that led to the charges being filed after they were rejected by the U.S. Attorney in New York. Many of the disturbing features of this case are explained in more detail to the Department in a letter from William W. Taylor, who represents Mr. Donziger for the law firm Zuckerman Spaeder, dated April 2 of this year.

We believe that a high-level review will reveal that the contempt case clearly is a violation of Mr. Donziger’s rights and the rights of the affected communities in Ecuador when a U.S. corporation has been able to wrest power from the government to prosecute the lawyer who helped to hold it accountable for human rights abuses, in a process that appears to be abetted by judges with their own conflicts of interest.

We thank you in advance for any actions you and your Department take to right these wrongs.

Sincerely,

Jody Williams, NPP (1997)…..etc, etc, etc.