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Fourth UA: 55/24 AMR 51/8903/2025 USA of January 7, 2025

USA

ENVIRONMENTAL LAWYER MUST BE PARDONED

Steven Donziger is an environmental lawyer and human rights defender who stood up to the oil giant Chevron. He successfully represented Ecuadorian communities affected by toxic oil dumping. After his victory, Chevron sued him in the U.S. and demanded access to his electronic devices. Steven refused, citing concerns about attorney-client confidentiality and the safety of his clients. As a result, he was convicted of contempt of court and unjustly detained, spending nearly three years under house arrest and additional time in prison. Before leaving office on 20 January, President Biden should pardon Mr. Donziger and protect environmental defenders from corporate retaliation.

Write to President Biden urging him to:

- Pardon Mr. Donziger's 2022 Class B federal misdemeanour conviction and ensure that he can continue his work defending human rights without fear of reprisals.

Write to:

President Joseph Biden

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW

Washington, DC 20500, USA

Webform: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/>

White House Comment line: (202) 456-1111

Salutation: Your Excellency:

Please use Amnesty International USA's contact information to fill out the webform:

1150 18th St NW #550,

Washington, DC 20036

Phone: +1 800-266-3789

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Steven Donziger has dedicated his career to environmental justice. In 1993, he joined a legal team representing Indigenous communities in Ecuador against Chevron Corporation. These communities suffered from one of the worst oil-related environmental disasters in modern history.

After nearly two decades of legal battles, an Ecuadorian court ruled in 2011 that Chevron had deliberately discharged billions of gallons of toxic oil waste onto ancestral lands in the Amazon rainforest. The court found Chevron responsible for devastating environmental and health damage and ordered it to pay billions in compensation.

Instead of complying, Chevron moved its assets out of Ecuador to avoid payment and launched a campaign of legal retaliation.

After losing in Ecuador, Chevron filed lawsuits in the U.S. against Steven Donziger, his legal team, and others who supported the case. The proceedings were deeply flawed, including a lack of impartiality and attempts to undermine attorney-client privilege.

In 2019, a judge took the unprecedented step of appointing private prosecutors to pursue criminal contempt charges against Donziger after federal prosecutors declined to take the case. Donziger was placed under house arrest with GPS monitoring, and his detention continued beyond the maximum legal period.

In 2021, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention declared his detention illegal under international law. Despite this, U.S. authorities have failed to act on the UN's findings, leaving Donziger to face continued attacks from Chevron.

Steven Donziger's case exemplifies a SLAPP suit—litigation intended to silence and intimidate activists. These lawsuits drain financial and emotional resources, deterring others from speaking out against corporate wrongdoing.

Chevron's actions are a stark reminder of the dangers faced by environmental defenders. By pardoning Donziger, President Biden can correct this injustice, reaffirm the United States' commitment to international human rights, and send a powerful message: corporate retaliation against human rights defenders will not be tolerated.

Please take action as soon as possible until January 20, 2025! The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.