



The National Roundtable against Metallic Mining completely rejects the sentencing in the cases of murdered environmentalists from Cabañas

In response to the sentencing of six of those convicted in the murders of five people dedicated to protecting the environment in the town of Trinidad, Sensuntepeque in Cabañas, the National Roundtable against Metallic Mining in El Salvador (the Mesa in Spanish) rejects the decision issued by the Specialized Sentencing Tribunal in San Salvador because it does not hold all the authors of the crimes responsible by not including out the intellectual authors.

As the National Roundtable we, also, expresses our complete rejection for the return of Astor Escalante as head of the Attorney General's Office, and would like to point out that during his period as Attorney General in 2009, the current situation of impunity and ineffective judicial systems, in general, continued. This is proven by the persecution, threats and terror that environmentalists and human rights defenders experienced during that year and that has continued in Cabañas. To date, the Attorney General's Office and the Civilian National Police have not presented convincing evidence that identifies the intellectual authors that ordered these crimes against the population who was defending its rights. An emblematic case is the abuses that journalists of Radio Victoria continue to suffer, in municipality of Victoria in Cabañas.

The civil society organizations that make up the Mesa assert that the constant unrest that environmental and human rights defenders, specifically those you oppose mining, face is one of the main reasons the current Attorney General of the Republic should be discredited and to demand more suitable candidates for these types of government positions.

We would like to point out that, as in the case of Marcelo Rivera in 2009, the Attorney General rejected the hypothesis that these crimes against environmentalists are tied to activities that environmentalists organize against mining. We insist that the persecution and prior threats to the victims, the apparent planning of the crimes, and the use of weapons supposedly only available to the Armed Forces are some of the factors that should be considered in the investigations because they point to intellectual authors who have still not been investigated, as well as hit men.

Despite the constant demands voiced by the civil society organizations that make up the Mesa that serious and thorough investigations need to be carried out, in the current justice system "political crimes" committed in El Salvador are hid behind delinquency. This has created a climate of impunity that guarantees that these crimes continue without serious risks for the intellectual authors. In the case of the murders of environmentalists, we believe that the main governmental institution charged with guaranteeing quick and effective access to justice, the Attorney General's office, has, from the beginning, ruled out this hypothesis, cutting off the possibility of thorough investigations and the arrest of the intellectual authors behind the crimes.

The Attorney General's Office is mistaken in rejecting a priori the possible responsibility in these murders of people tied to Pacific Rim. It's contradictory that the Attorney General's Office has hinted that incursion of mining companies in the communities is what created internal divisions in communities and between the people that live in them. We maintain that this is the detonator that led to the various

murders of environmentalists and now, irresponsibly, the Attorney General's Office seems not to recognize this fact.

Lastly, with respect to the recently released sentences for the six convicted in the murders of environmentalists, we denounce the troubling delay of justice which we attribute to the Attorney General's Office and its head, because they were in charge of leading the investigations. We remind the authorities that the deplorable crimes of 2009 have been followed by a wave of similarly deplorable crimes that have never been resolved by the authorities: the death threats against members of Radio Victoria; the kidnapping and assassination attempts of Bishop Luis Alberto Quintanilla and Father Neftali Ruiz, priest and the Secretary of the Board of the Environmental Committee of Cabañas (CAC); the death threats against Antonio Pacheco, the President of the Association for Social Development Santa Marta (ADES); and the death threats against Hector Berrios and Zenayda Serrano, of the Unified Movement Francisco Sanchez 1932 (MUFRAS 32), none of which have shown significant advances in their respective investigations, which, therefore, denies the victims swift and fulfilled justice.

For this reason, as Salvadorans, the National Roundtable against Metallic Mining, DEMANDS:

1. An objective, impartial investigation without political bias or personal interests into the structures that support and promote the resurgence of illegal armed groups with political ties in the Department of Cabañas. It is not acceptable that the communities have had to take the initiative to prove the facts in these cases when government institutions like the Police and Attorney General's Office are legally responsible for the investigations.
2. An objective and impartial investigation into the causes of the wave of violence in the region, including death threats towards environmentalists and journalists, kidnapping and murder attempts. It is fundamental that the intellectual authors in all of these crimes be investigated and prosecuted.
3. That these cases should be given to prosecutors that have not previously been accused of due process violations or of manipulating investigations for political reasons.
4. That the recommendations made by the Interamerican Commission on Human Rights suggesting immediate protection for activists from civil society organizations, journalists and human rights defenders from the threatened organizations and those who oppose metallic mining projects and which state that physical safety continues to be at serious risk.
5. That the Attorney General of the Republic and officials from the Ministry of Justice and Public Security take seriously the conclusions released by the Joint Group on the Investigation of Illegal Armed Groups with Political Motives in its report from June 28, 1994 which were never adopted by the Salvadoran Government. The report showed the mutation of the prior death squad structures to fragmented cells that are tied to common and organized crime which could potentially participate in political violence. These groups take advantage of the fertile ground presented by delinquency to hire assassins for politically motivated violence and increase impunity.

¡STOP THE PERSECUTION OF ANTI-MINING ENVIRONMENTALISTS!