

Attorney General Merrick Garland
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20530
USA

Webform: <https://www.justice.gov/doj/webform/your-message-department-justice>

Dear Attorney General Garland,

Steven Donziger is a US lawyer and environmental rights defender who has represented victims of oil dumping in a case against Chevron Corporation in Ecuador. He was previously held under pre-trial house arrest for over two years, after he refused to comply with a court order to hand over his electronic devices, as the disclosure could compromise attorney-client privilege and put his clients at risk. The detention follows a long-running smear campaign against Steven Donziger and other human rights defenders by Chevron.

In September 2021, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found that Steven Donziger's deprivation of liberty is arbitrary, lacks any legal basis and is in violation of several norms relating to the right to a fair trial, including the apparent lack of impartiality of the courts. The Working Group concluded that his detention appears to be in retaliation for his legal representation of Indigenous communities in Ecuador.

Despite serious concerns over the lack of independence, objectivity and impartiality of the judge involved in the proceedings, Steven Donziger was sentenced on 1 October to six months in prison. He reported to prison on 27 October, and on 9 December he was released to spend the rest of his sentence under house arrest.

I urge the Department of Justice to assume jurisdiction over the case instead of the private prosecutor, and promptly implement the UN Working Group's decision by ensuring that Steven Donziger is released immediately and unconditionally. I also call on you to launch a full and independent investigation of the circumstances surrounding Steven Donziger's arbitrary deprivation of liberty and take the necessary measures to ensure that corporations do not abuse the justice system to target and harass human rights defenders.

Sincerely,