

PRESS RELEASE

Bolivian government comes under international pressure to drop false charges against Pablo Solón and Rafael Archondo, and stop the El Bala and Chepete dams

Thursday 27 July 2017, by [Focus on the Global South](#) (Date first published: 27 July 2017).

More than 70 organisations and 700 people from over 50 countries have called on the Bolivian government to drop its false charges against its former UN representatives, Pablo Solón and Rafael Archondo and to stop the proposed hydroelectric power projects, El Bala and Chepete.

The signatories include prominent public intellectuals, such as Noam Chomsky, Walden Bello and Susan George; Naomi Klein, author of *The Shock Doctrine*; US environmental leader Bill McKibben; Nigerian award-winning environmentalist, Nnimmo Bassey; renowned author Amitav Ghosh; Hollywood actress and indigenous rights activist Qorianka Kilcher; as well as a number of European parliamentary representatives, such as Philippe Lamberts, Helmut Scholz and Soren Sondergaard. The statement has also been supported by leading international human rights, peace and justice organisations such as Focus on the Global South, Transnational Institute, Global Justice Now, ATTAC, Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, International Peace Bureau, CETRI, Migrant Forum Asia and FIAN International.

Many of the signatories have supported the Bolivian government since the election of Evo Morales in 2005, backing the country for its leadership on international issues, such as the Right to Water, the Rights of Mother Earth and Buen Vivir. The statement expresses their “profound disappointment” that the government is now persecuting its prominent former statesmen for daring to speak out against the environmentally-destructive hydroelectric power project and the El Bala and Chepete dams. The statement also expresses concern at other attempts to silence dissent to extractive projects. The statement concludes “Bolivia will have no credibility on climate change and the rights of Mother Earth if it invests in mega-dams and persecutes its principal environmental defenders.”

Shalmali Guttal of Focus on the Global South and one of the initiators of the sign-on statement said: “This is a clear case of criminalization of resistance to extractivist, destructive development. We are shocked to see this happening in Bolivia to advocates of climate justice and indigenous peoples’ rights by a government we had so much hope in.”

Walden Bello said: “Pablo Solón should be given an award for fighting for Bolivia’s environment instead of being persecuted. The Bolivian government should drop all charges against him and Rafael Archondo immediately.”

Brid Brennan of Transnational Institute said: “We hope the Bolivian government can live up to its rhetoric of ‘Buen Vivir’, by protecting its environmental defenders and advancing a new energy future - based not on mega-dams and fossil fuels - but on democratically-controlled public wind and solar energy.”

Dorothy Guerrero of Global Justice Now said: “We applauded Bolivia for enshrining the Law of Mother Earth in your constitution, making it the world’s first laws granting all nature equal rights to humans. We also supported Bolivia’s strong Southern voice in demanding for big countries like the US and Britain to do steep carbon emission cuts in the UNFCCC. Pablo Solon and Rafael Archondo are speaking for all of us and for nature with their opposition against El Bala and Chepete mega dams.”

It has just come to light that the criminal complaints against Solon and Archondo have expired and the charges against them hold no legal validity, so any pursuance of this case would be an even clearer case of political persecution.

Pablo Solon, said: “Even if they put me in jail, the mega dams of El Bala and Chepete will be a disaster for nature, indigenous peoples and Bolivia’s economy.”

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The statement sent to the Bolivian government and full list of endorsements can be found here
<https://focusweb.org/content/drop-false-charges-against-solon-and-archondo-stop-el-bala-chepete-mega-dams>

See also on ESSF (article 41534), [Bolivia: Signon statement in support of Pablo Solon, Rafael Archondo and against the Bala Chepete megadams](#)
