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HONDURAS WATER DEFENDERS PRE-TRIAL RELEASE REJECTED

In August 2021, the Supreme Court of Honduras accepted the Attorney General Office's request to extend for six months the pre-trial detention of the defenders of the Guapinol river, despite the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention declaring their detention as arbitrary and asking for their immediate release. We will assess new and better ways to continue our efforts to ensure the release of the defenders.

NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUESTED. MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.

Eight members of the Municipal Committee for the Defence of Common and Public Assets (CMDBCP), also known as defenders of the Guapinol river, will continue in pre-trial prison in Yoro (North Honduras). The defenders have been imprisoned for two years for standing up in defense of protected water sources in danger by a mining project, despite the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention declaring their detention as arbitrary and asking for their immediate release. UN human rights experts also recommended all states to consider alternatives to imprisonment to reduce risks of spreading COVID-19, particularly for persons in pretrial detention or detained without legal basis. Amnesty International has urged Honduran authorities to review the preventive detention of all eight defenders and take all necessary measures to immediately release them.

On 29 July 2021, the Attorney General Office of Honduras requested the Criminal Chamber Supreme Court to extend the pre-trial detention for six months, since the legal duration of this preventive measure is two years, and the trial had not yet been scheduled. Around the second anniversary of their imprisonment, which took place on 26 August, the Supreme Court decided to in favour of the extension. On the other hand, the Sentencing Court in Trujillo schedule the trial for the beginning of December 2021.

While we have not achieved the main goal of their release, we believe that the public campaign on behalf of the defenders of the Guapinol river, including appeals sent by Amnesty International members, contributed to bringing attention to the case. Amnesty International will continue monitoring the situation and will be ready to further campaign for the release of the defenders.