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## PRESS RELEASE

### JUSTICE AND REPARATION: THE STRUGGLE OF CHEVRON-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES IN COVID-19 TIMES #GlobalAntiChevron Day

During the seventh "Global Anti-Chevron Day" we commemorated the struggle of the peoples on the eve of [Chevron's Annual Assembly to be held on May 27, 2020](#).

This year, affected indigenous communities from the Ecuadorian Amazon, the Niger Delta and the Argentinean Patagonia, joined together in a press conference to denounce the violation of their rights, as well as their situation of vulnerability to COVID-19, particularly difficult due to the contamination of their territories caused by the Chevron oil transnational. They call on the shareholders of the corporation to respect their right to justice and reparation. They also call for international solidarity to support for the vindication of rights of the communities and peoples affected by corporate impunity and their struggle for a dignified life.

The Union of Those Affected by Texaco's Oil Operations (UDAPT), a grassroots organization that represents the peasant and indigenous communities affected by Chevron's operations in Ecuador, has been fighting for [26 years against the transnational](#) for causing one of the most important environmental disasters in the world and for seriously affecting the ancestral territories and culture of six native indigenous peoples and nationalities: Cofán, Kichwa, Siekopai, Siona, Shuar and Waorani.

Justino Piaguage, President of the Siekopai Nationality, member of the UDAPT, and also plaintiff against the Chevron Oil Company explains: *"As a result of oil exploitation, we have lost the main means of subsistence of our peoples, such as hunting; fishing; gathering; harmonious life and spiritual development. Everything has been disrupted, interrupted by Chevron's operations. That is why today we are in a worse position to face the crisis of the pandemic. This worldwide humanitarian crisis is an exhortation of nature towards changes, towards forms of life, towards stopping the environmental damages. We would have been in a better situation, if we had not had that oil aggression which we are facing every day. We, Siekopai are only 700 inhabitants and the Cofanes have about 1200 members. Now our peoples are dying, being victims of Chevron's abuses and violations that have left us vulnerable to disease. In 2018, Ecuador's Constitutional Court as last instance issued its [ruling on the case in Ecuador](#), declaring the transnational Chevron (formerly Texaco) guilty and charging it with a payment of 9.5 billion US-dollars, to repair the damage caused*



to the affected communities.

Justino Piaguage adds: *"I want to tell the world, all the media and all the shareholders of Chevron, that we have won the sentence in the Chevron case. Still it cannot be possible for us to wait for justice and our comrades in struggle have to die. Three days ago a comrade died without seeing justice, without having seen nature repaired, without having seen the restoration of the environment. We want to demand the Ecuadorian state to respect our sentence. This verdict belongs to our communities. We have demanded to repair the environmental and cultural damages. Therefore we also ask not intervene in our litigation through this arbitral award. The Ecuadorian state wants to intervene through this arbitration and to annul our case. Therefore we call on the world to support us. We want our Amazon to be free of contamination."*

Despite the fact that the ruling is unappealable, definitive and imprescriptible and is in full force, the oil corporation, making use of its enormous economic power, activated the mechanism of the international arbitration system (ISDS), which has been [questioned by a large part of international civil society](#). Thus, in August 2018, a private international tribunal issued an arbitration award that ordered the Ecuadorian state to violate its own Constitution and international human rights conventions. More than 280 organizations and networks representing than 280 million people denounced the unconstitutionality of this decision by addressing [an open letter to the Ecuadorian government](#) in May 2019.

Despite the declarations of Chevron's board, the litigation is not over, and the communities will continue their actions to seek the enforcement of the judgement of the Ecuadorian Justice in other countries. Lidia Aguinda, a member of UDAPT and one of the Kichwas plaintiffs against Chevron, addresses the shareholders of the company and reminds them that *"the crime caused by their oil company is here. Many people continue to die every year with cancer. Our struggle will continue until they pay us what they owe us so that we can repair all the damage caused to the Amazon. We are not going to give up on this battle until we have full access to justice."*

The case of the Ecuadorian Amazon is not the only one. It is part of a [series of socio-environmental conflicts generated by the oil company](#). In this respect, Martín Álvarez, member of the Observatorio Petrolero Sur -OPSur- in Argentina, observes that *"the same company that destroyed part of the Ecuadorian Amazon is destroying the Mapuche territory of the Campo Maripe community, in the province of Neuquén, with an important fracking project. Here, this transnational associated with the state company YPF, with secret agreements. It obtained ample subsidies and caused a lot of contamination, oil spills, explosions and filtrations. The consultation with the Mapuche people was never carried out. It is also worth mentioning that in order to invest in fracking in Argentina, Chevron asked not to allow the embargo of the affected people in the Amazon, a barter of impunity for money."*

In turn, Lefxaru Nawel, from the [Mapuche Confederation of Neuquén](#), Zonal Xawvanko, adds: *"from*

*2013 the Chevron-YPF pact was signed behind the backs of the population with a repression of more than 8 hours, with more than 20 wounded, one of them with a lead bullet. Then, the legislature of Neuquén handed over the territories to Chevron for more than 30 years, and since then what we have seen is an increase in pollution, in the destruction of the territories, in the creation of oil dumps on the banks of large urban centers. Chevron acts with impunity with a total absence of the control that the State should have. The spokesman from the Mapuche community also comments: "In these times of pandemic, where people talk about health and taking care of nature, but what the oil companies have done is generate this contamination. Those of us who live in these places know that the impact is cumulative, that it does not kill us fulminously like a shot, but rather kills us slowly day by day. It deteriorates our lives, our vital capacity and above all the immune systems that are becoming weaker and weaker, more vulnerable to any disease that may come. "*

On the other hand, Bielaye George, from the Kolouma community in Bayelsa state in Nigeria, denounced the impacts on his community of the operations that Chevron has had in the last 50 years. In [January 2012 a Chevron gas well in Koluama suffered explosions for 46 days](#). *"The explosion has had major negative impacts on the health of our community. It has affected people's lives, river life, and contaminated the sea with oil. Now we suffer from headaches, dizziness, we have inhaled toxic chemicals since the operations started. Women in the community are more prone to breast cancer. Our average life span has been reduced. Our health has deteriorated, we don't have clean water and now with COVID 19 the authorities say we must wash our hands constantly, but we don't even have water to drink. Much less do we have water to wash our hands. Our water comes from the well which is contaminated because the soil is polluted with oil. We are more vulnerable to COVID 19 because of the disastrous effects that Chevron's operations have caused in our lives, in our bodies, in our health, in our livelihoods. We women do not have health centers, we do not have jobs, we do not have clean water. To this day, Chevron has not cleaned up the environmental disaster it caused nor recognized the impacts this has had on the health of our population, nor the differential effects this has had on the women of the community, who lead their households.*

Similarly, Emem Okon of the [Kebetkache Women's Resource and Development Center](#) says "Corporations are gradually killing people every day, and they don't see anything wrong with this. Chevron like any other transnational corporation operating in the Niger Delta has been insensitive to the rights of indigenous communities. Chevron, even after the explosion of 2012 acts under the impression that the communities did not suffer any negative impact. »

Chevron's pursuit of profit has harmed and endangered the lives of millions of people, from the Mapuche communities in Argentina to the communities of Koluama in the Niger Delta. Every day of the company's operations involve destruction, contamination and put the future of life on this planet at risk. Chevron is one of the transnational corporations that has contributed [the most to the climate change](#). Its carbon and methane emissions place it among the main companies that have historically polluted and continue to exacerbate the climate crisis.



The company's actions around the world are a clear example of how transnationals have mechanisms of impunity embedded in the international system. According to Nathalie Rengifo of Corporate Accountability "This case reflects once again the urgent need for a [United Nations Binding Treaty](#) that obliges transnational corporations to respect human rights and has an international court of justice. The process towards binding standards is currently underway in the Human Rights Council, and one of the proposals for content developed by the "[Global Campaign to Reclaim the Sovereignty of Peoples, Dismantle Corporate Power and Stop Impunity](#) », representing more than 200 movements, social organizations and unions, lies precisely in having such a court.

The communities affected by Chevron want neither mercy nor charity. They demand justice and a life with dignity in harmony with nature. Their struggle is not only oriented against Chevron, it is a battle for humanity.

Let us listen to the words of our Mapuche comrade: *"If we are more aware as a human family, that it is necessary to take care of the land, the water, the air, please let's stop the oil companies, let's stop the fracking and really think about how we want to live because all the people of the world deserve to live well. Together in this struggle we must put an end to the pollution, destruction, death and plundering that the oil companies generate".*

