



Attn.

The President of Mexico, Mr. Andrés Manuel López Obrador
The Secretary of the Interior of Mexico, Ms. Olga Sánchez Cordero
The Governor of Jalisco, Mr. Enrique Alfaro Ramírez
The Mayor of El Salto, Jalisco, Mr. Ricardo Zaid Santillán Cortés
The Mayor of Juanacatlán, Jalisco, Ms Adriana Cortés González

Amsterdam, Boston, Geneva

20 April 2021

Subject: Aggression against human rights defenders in El Salto, Jalisco, Mexico

Dear Representatives,

We address this communication to you as NGOs with consultative status with the United Nations (ECOSOC).

We want to express our **deepest concerns regarding the safety of members of the Agrupación Un Salto de Vida in Jalisco (Mexico)**. At dawn on April 10, 2021, the vehicle that Un Salto de Vida uses for its activities in defence of the environment and human rights suddenly caught fire, and was burned completely.

There is a clear possibility that the event of April 10 constitutes a new aggression, as it is known that, since 2010, threats and attacks have been registered against Un Salto de Vida in relation to their activities in defence of the environment and the health of the Santiago River and human rights of surrounding communities. These activities include: the adequate closure of the Los Laureles landfill of the CAABSA Eagle company, the definitive cancellation of the La Charrería thermoelectric project of the Spanish company Fistera Energy, the closure of the El Mirador subdivision of the Casas Bali company and fighting against other social and environmental problems in the region (*see the statement from Un Salto de Vida in the annex*).

Both the Transnational Institute and Corporate Accountability are familiar with the situation of the environmental and human rights defenders of Un Salto de Vida from our participation in the International Caravan of Observers (#ToxiTourMexico) that visited the Santiago River Basin in December 2019, among other highly polluted regions in Mexico. The Caravan was attended by members of the European Parliament, the United States Minnesota Senate, the Basque Parliament, academics, scientists, journalists and representatives of human rights organizations and research centres in Germany, Argentina, Ecuador, the United States, France, Catalonia, Mexico, the Basque Country and the Netherlands.

In the context of the Caravan, we were able to verify and shocked by the alarming **environmental and health emergency situation** in which the populations surrounding the Santiago River find themselves, in particular El Salto and Juanacatlán. Both cities are located in the third largest industrial corridor in the

country, where thousands of national and international companies are based. In this regard, we recall that an investigation carried out by IMTA between 2009 and 2011 analysed samples from the river and municipal and industrial discharges and found 1.090 chemical substances, some of them highly toxic¹.

During the visit of the Caravan, the health study of the University of San Luis Potosí was presented to the public, which had been originally requested by the State Water Commission (CEA)². The study was concluded in 2011, but the Government of Jalisco did not make it available to the public and did not disseminate it for 10 years, despite the fact that it presented **very serious data on the health of girls and boys from six towns near the Santiago River between 2009 and 2011**. In particular, with regard to heavy metals, the study found:

- Arsenic (related to cancer and neurotoxicity, among other diseases) in more than 40% of the children of Juanacatlán;
- Cadmium (linked to kidney damage) in about 98% of the children in El Salto, 72% in Juanacatlán, 84% in La Cofradía and 77% in Puente Grande;
- Lead (a powerful neurotoxic) in 94% of the children of Juanacatlán;
- Muconic acid (due to the ingestion of benzene, which is associated with cancer) in 62% of the children of El Salto and 74% in Juanacatlán.

In addition, it was shown that almost half of the sampled population suffered from gastrointestinal, respiratory, skin and eye problems. Hematological alterations were detected in 89% of the children sampled in La Cofradía and 79% in El Salto, drawing attention to the fact that these results could not be attributed to any case of anaemia. These disorders prevent oxygen from reaching the brain or other organs in adequate amounts, affecting verbal and learning skills, memory capacity, verbal comprehension and consequently school achievement.

We also call your attention to the fact that in 2017, the research of Ms Graciela González, a member of Un Salto de Vida, on air quality and its effects on the respiratory function of the child population of El Salto **recommended the urgent implementation of an epidemiological surveillance system**, as well as a modification in the care processes, registration and prevention for respiratory diseases associated with the exposure of toxic substances present in the environment³.

In view of this dramatic situation, **we believe that the work of Un Salto de Vida to denounce human rights violations and protect the environment are of the utmost importance for the people of Jalisco and Mexico more broadly**. Un Salto de Vida is an example of responsible citizenship committed to social welfare, and must be protected as such.

Therefore, we urge you to: take immediate and urgent steps to

- **Guarantee protection measures for the members of Un Salto de Vida.**
- **Investigate and make public the events that occurred at dawn on April 10 2021.**
- **Address the corporate-linked problems mentioned in the attached statement of Un Salto de Vida.**

¹ Please consult: IMTA y CEA Jalisco. *Informe final: Actualización del estudio de calidad del agua del río Santiago (desde su nacimiento en el lago de Chapala hasta la presa Santa Rosa)*. IMTA –CEA: México, 2011. Annex V.5, page 10.

² UASLP – Universidad Autónoma de San Luis Potosí y CEA – Comisión Estatal de Agua de Jalisco. *Propuesta metodológica para la implantación de una batería de indicadores de salud que favorezcan el establecimiento de programas de diagnóstico, intervención y vigilancia epidemiológica en las poblaciones ubicadas en la zona de influencia del proyecto de la Presa Arcediano en el Estado de Jalisco*. UASLP Y CEA: 2011, pages 99, 107, 108, 114, 125, 141, and 142 (https://desinformemonos.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/INFORME-FINAL-ARCEDIANO_CEA_UEAS_JALISCO_2011_2.pdf)

³ Please consult: González, G. *Calidad Del Aire y su Efecto en la Función Respiratoria de la Población Infantil de El Salto, Jalisco*. Tesis de Maestría en Ciencias de la Salud Ambiental, Universidad de Guadalajara. Guadalajara, 2017, page 254 (https://www.ambientesjustos.org/descargas/CALIDAD_DEL_AIRE_Y_SU_EFECTO_EN_LA_FUNCION_RESPIRATORIADELA.pdf)

We remain on high alert and attentive to the evolution of the situation, in solidarity with the members of Un Salto de Vida.

We look forward to your responses and appreciate your attention.

Sincerely yours,

CETIM

Corporate Accountability

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Annex: Statement of Un Salto de Vida of 10 April 2021