



July 12, 2017

Evo Morales
President of Bolivia
Ministerio de la Presidencia
Palacio de Gobierno
Calle Ayacucho esquina Comercio
La Paz, Bolivia

Dear President Morales:

On behalf of International Rivers, I am writing to express my deep concern about the harassment, intimidation, and attempts to criminalize Pablo Solón and Rafael Archondo.

Since 1985, International Rivers has been at the heart of the global efforts to protect rivers and the rights of communities that depend on them. We work with an international network of dam-affected people, grassroots organizations, environmentalists, human rights advocates and others who are committed to others who are committed to protecting rivers and our freshwater resources. We campaign against projects and policies which damage our rivers; and advocate for better laws, policy and governance to protect our precious freshwater resources.

On its face, your government's action against Solón and Archondo is meant to silence Bolivian leaders who are speaking out to protect Bolivia's rivers. The trumped-up charges were delivered after Solón and Archondo spoke out against the El Bala and El Chepete hydroelectric dams, which would submerge parts of Madidi National Park, Pilon Lajas Biosphere Reserve, and surrounding areas. In particular, Solón and Archondo have expressed concerns that data shows that these dams will generate a deficit.

These charges are unfortunately part of a global trend criminalizing environmental defenders and water protectors who speak out for Indigenous People's rights and the protection of natural resources. Michel Forst, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, has called on the international community to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to violence against environmental human rights defenders. The actions against Solón and Archondo demonstrate that the Bolivian Government is no better than the U.S. government, which criminalized Indigenous Peoples protecting Standing Rock from the Dakota Access Pipeline.

We ask you to immediately drop all charges against Pablo Solón and Rafael Archondo. Instead, we ask you to review their findings about the El Bala and El Chepete dams and investigate alternatives that will better serve Bolivia's people, economy, and environment.

I respectfully await your response.

Sincerely,

Kate Horner
Executive Director