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# GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAUREATES URGE CHILEAN GOVERNMENT TO STOP ATTACKS ON INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL CHAMPIONS; LEADERS SUPPORT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CHILE'S CAMPAIGN FOR INVESTIGATION OF ASSAULTS ON MAPUCHE COMMUNITIES

More than 85 environmental leaders from around the world today called on the President of Chile and the Chilean Department of Justice to investigate attacks on Chilean Indigenous leaders fighting to protect their environment, including Mapuche leader Alberto Curamil, who won the Goldman Environmental Prize in 2019 for his activism. The environmentalists joined Amnesty International Chile, which recently launched a grassroots pressure campaign.

A letter signed by winners of the Goldman Environmental Prize from nearly four dozen countries expressed particular concern about Prize recipient Alberto Curamil, a Mapuche Indigenous leader, who was attacked and shot by police earlier this year when he came to the aid of Elena Paine, a local Mapuche leader whose house and crops had been burned to the ground. The Mapuche people have been fighting development proposals that could deplete water resources and drive them off their native lands.

The global environmental leaders urged President Sebastian Piñera and other Chilean officials to:
- stop aggressive and often deadly attacks on the Mapuche community
- investigate incidents in which Mapuche leaders were injured or had property destroyed
- ensure that police and the judicial system respect human rights, land rights and self-determination.

Alfred Brownell, a Goldman Prize winner from Liberia, explained, "We are particularly concerned for Mr. Curamil's safety because we have already suffered the loss of one of our own in 2016 when Honduran activist Berta Caceres was murdered by power company executives for opposing a hydroelectric project." Eight men convicted of plotting her murder were sentenced to prison.

Mr. Curamil responded, "If the Chilean Police can shoot to kill and then torture a Mapuche leader, and there is no justice. With this global appeal and solidarity between peoples, we can end the injustices and the pillaging of Mother Earth."

Craig Williams, an activist from Kentucky who won a Goldman Prize for organizing a national movement to stop incineration of chemical weapons, added, "The assault on Mr. Curamil, Ms. Paine and their families are the most recent manifestation of the Chilean government's brutal policies toward Indigenous communities. Chilean leaders must stop allowing corporations and wealthy individuals to destroy natural resources and violate human rights."

The signatories to the letter are all past recipients of the Goldman Environmental Prize, which recognizes grassroots environmental activists from around the world for sustained, significant efforts to protect and enhance the natural environment, often at great personal risk. Honorees have focused on protecting endangered ecosystems and species, combating destructive development projects, promoting sustainability, and striving for environmental justice.

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Additional background information
https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/07/01/alberto-curamil-chile-environmental-defender-safety/

Video (password mvfg)
English: https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/550063224
Spanish:  https://vimeo.com/566406152
No narration: https://vimeo.com/566247114

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