

Ottawa, Canada, March 11, 2026

**Ambassador Craig Kowalik,**  
Canadian Embassy in Ecuador

**Subject:** Request to implement *Voices at Risk Guidelines* in support of the protection of FOA members facing unfounded criminal proceedings pursued by the Canadian mining company to prevent them from doing their environmental work.

We, the undersigned Ecuadorian, Canadian and international civil society organizations, are writing to you to express our deep concerns over the criminalization of Indigenous and environmental defenders from the Federation of Indigenous and Campesino Organizations of Azuay (FOA, *Federación de Organizaciones Indígenas y Campesinas del Azuay*) for their environmental work protecting the Páramo de Kimsakocha from Canadian mining company DPM Metals' Loma Larga mining project in the province of Azuay, Ecuador. We ask you to **take immediate action to protect these environmental and water defenders and call on the company to uphold human rights in accordance with Canada's Voices at Risk guidelines.**

For [more than 30 years](#), the communities affected by this mining project have peacefully worked for the protection of the Kimsakocha páramo, a high altitude wetland that plays a fundamental role in regulating the water cycle for the region, provides important ecosystem services for climate change adaptation and resilience, and provides **fresh water** for tens of thousands of people.

In 2025, the FOA and local environmental organizations, including the Cabildo por el Agua, led several major environmental actions to protect the Kimsakocha páramo and the region's water system. They spearheaded the [historic march in defence of water](#) on September 16, 2025, with the participation of approximately 100,000 people from the province of Azuay and other provinces of the country. The FOA and its partners also held a [cleanup initiative](#) in the Kimsakocha páramo a few days after the historic march, to collect waste abandoned by the company DPM Metals from the headwaters of the Iruquis and Tarqui rivers.

Through these peaceful actions, the FOA and local allies played an important role in influencing the Ecuadorian government's decision to revoke the Loma Larga project's environmental license. However, these advances have also led to **reprisals against members of the FOA and the Cabildo por el Agua**, including the **freezing of bank accounts** for alleged unjustified private enrichment.

In November, an [open letter](#) addressed to DPM Metals Inc., and signed by 106 international organizations, 48 university professors, lawyers, indigenous leaders, and human rights activists,

was sent to you and your office. In this letter, the company was urged to permanently shut down its Loma Larga project and comply with Ecuadorian law (see attached letter).

That same month, **DPM Metals brought criminal charges against Lauro Sigcha, Lizardo Zhaqui, Marco Tapia, Ruth Pugo, Carmita Perez, and Yaku Perez**, members of the FOA, **for the alleged crimes of damage to property and unlawful association**. The charges are related to the cleanup effort in the Kimsakocha páramo.

In a [press release](#) on November 25, the FOA characterized this legal action by the company as “an act of intimidation that seeks to deter our defence of the territory, not only for exposing mining pollution, but also for the legal and community actions that have prevented the advance of mega-mining in the area.” The criminalization of these community leaders for their environmental work violates their constitutional rights to personal integrity, freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of peaceful assembly.

**It should be noted that the criminalization of local environmental defenders is not the first instance of unethical and irresponsible business conduct by DPM Metals Inc.**

**The Canadian company has sought to deny, for example, the existence of the Indigenous community of Escaleras in their reports and in the courts by arguing that there were no Indigenous peoples in the area affected by the project.** The courts sided with the communities. The lack of free, prior and informed consultation with Indigenous communities, a lack of environmental consultation, and concerns about the impact on the environment and drinking water downstream from the mining project led to its suspension in 2022 by a local court, a ruling that was confirmed by other local courts in 2022, 2023 and upheld in 2024 by the Constitutional Court of Ecuador.

We are deeply concerned about **this recent incident of a Canadian company filing a criminal lawsuit against environmental defenders in the Azuay province** ( environmental defenders in [Las Naves](#) and [Paloquemado](#) face similar unfounded criminal proceedings filed by Canadian mining companies) in order to silence their peaceful resistance to its Loma Larga project, **especially in the context of the imminent signing and ratification of a [free trade agreement \(FTA\)](#)** between Canada and Ecuador that seeks to facilitate even more Canadian mining investments in Ecuador and will provide even greater protection for Canadian mining companies.

The Canadian embassy has promoted the FTA between Canada and Ecuador as an inclusive and equitable agreement. We urge you not to remain indifferent to the criminalization of human rights defenders and Indigenous peoples in Ecuador and to listen to the voices of communities and organizations that are mobilizing to make visible the environmental and human rights impacts of Canadian mining companies in the country, which could be potentially exacerbated by this future FTA.

**The Canadian embassy must prioritize** human rights and the rights of nature over the interests of Canadian mining companies in the country.

As such, in accordance with Canada's Voices at Risk Guidelines, we ask the Canadian Embassy in Ecuador to:

1. **Attend**, as international observers, all upcoming hearings of the water defenders in the city of Cuenca
2. **Call on** DPM Metals cease its criminal proceedings against water defenders.
3. **Withdraw** financial, political, and commercial support for DPM Metals Inc. due to the serious risks of environmental damage, the violation of the Ecuadorian constitution, and the criminalization of environmental defenders.

Furthermore, given the support the Canadian embassy currently offers to DPM Metals Inc, we ask that you urge the Canadian company to:

1. **Permanently** suspend the Loma Larga mining project and its mining activities in the Kimsakocha páramo
2. **Respect** the court decisions of 2022, 2023, and 2024 and the binding referendums of 2019 in Girón and 2021 in Cuenca. DPM must respect these court decisions and comply with the law.
3. **Refrain** from any attempt to file lawsuits in arbitration courts, since Article 422 of the Ecuadorian Constitution prohibits the transfer of sovereign jurisdiction to international arbitration bodies.

We thank you in advance for your consideration and prompt action. We look forward to your response.

*CC: Ricardo Valdez, Mining Commercial Attaché at the Canadian Embassy; Wendy Drukier, Director for South America, Global Affairs Canada; Lauren Conway, Senior Desk Officer (Trade) - Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia; Honorable Maninder Sidhu, Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development; Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay, Porte-parole pour le Bloc Québécois en matière de Commerce international — Bloc Québécois spokesperson for International Trade; Don Davies, NDP Critic — International Trade; Elizabeth May, Parliamentary Leader of the Green Party of Canada.*

**Signatory organizations:**

**Argentina**

1. Ecologistas la parrilla

**Brazil**

2. Environmental Defender Law Center

**Bolivia**

3. TerraJusta

**Canada**

4. Americas Policy Group (APG)- *(Network that brings together 21 international development and humanitarian NGOs, human rights organizations, labour unions, faith-based and solidarity groups, and research institutions.)*
5. Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale (AQOCI)
6. Atlantic Regional Solidarity Network
7. Blue Planet Project
8. Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability (CNCA) - *(Network that unites 42 human rights, environmental, labour, faith and solidarity groups)*
9. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA)
10. Centre international de solidarité ouvrière (CISO)
11. CoDevelopment Canada
12. Coordination du Québec de la Marche mondiale des femmes (CQMMF)
13. Comité pour les droits humains en Amérique latine (CDHAL)
14. Common Frontiers
15. CUAL UQÀM (Comité UQÀM Amérique Latine)
16. Friends of the Earth Canada
17. Grandmothers Advocacy Network
18. Greenpeace Canada
19. Kairos Canada
20. Mining Injustice Solidarity Network (MISN)
21. MiningWatch Canada
22. Lagopède
23. Latin American Canadian Solidarity Association (LACSA)
24. Le Journal d'Alter
25. People's Health Movement - Canada
26. Rights Action
27. Victoria Central America Support Committee

**Chile**

28. Plataforma de Organizaciones América Latina y el Caribe Mejor Sin TLC

**Ecuador**

29. Alianza de Organizaciones por los Derechos Humanos del Ecuador
30. Cabildo por el Agua de Cuenca

31. Centro Agrícola Cantonal de Quevedo
32. Centro de Documentación en Derechos Humanos "Segundo Montes Mozo SJ" (CSMM)
33. Colectivo Agroecológico del Ecuador
34. Colectivo de Defensa del Cero Bomboli y de los Derechos de la Naturaleza EZA
35. COLEGIO DE ENFERMERAS DEL AZUAY
36. Fundación Savia Roja
37. Ecuador No te Dejes
38. Escuela Agroecológica de Mujeres Defensoras del Kimsacocha
39. Escuela de Mujeres Agroecológica de Leg Tabacay
40. Escuela de Agroecológica Virgen de la Merced
41. Escuela de Agroecológica y Biosalud de San Marcos
42. Escuela de Agroecología de Bulán
43. Escuela de Agroecológica de Guayara 2
44. Escuela de Agroecológica de la UNOIC-S
45. Escuela de Agroecológica de Mujeres Sisa Wayra
46. Escuela de Agroecológica, Liderazgo y Salud Ancestral de Mujeres de la Ucorsayta
47. Escuela de Agroecológica de Tenta
48. Escuela de Agroecológica de Mujeres Asomupkisa
49. Escuela de Agroecológica y Medicina Ancestral Hermano Miguel
50. Escuela Agroecológica de la Libertad
51. Federación de Organizaciones Indígenas y Campesinas del Azuay (FOA)
52. Fundación de Mujeres Luna Creciente
53. Junta Administradora de Agua Potable Victoria del Portete y Tarqui
54. Proyecto Dulcepamba
55. Pueblo Kichwa Purwa
56. Sistema de Riego Atapo Palmira

#### **England**

57. The Gaia Foundation

#### **Germany**

58. Rettet den Regenwald

#### **Holand**

59. Transnational Institute (TNI)

#### **Italy**

60. International Rights of Nature Tribunal

#### **Mexico**

61. Unión de Trabajadores Democráticos

**Papua New Guinea**

62. Environmental Care Community Lepemawi Timika, West Papua

63. LEPEMAWI TIMIKA WEST PAPUA

**Spain**

64. Aldea educativa

65. Alianza Verde

66. Asociación Plataforma Cívica Alcalaboza Viva

67. Environmental Justice Atlas ([ejatlas.org](http://ejatlas.org))

68. CGT Huelva

69. Club de amigos de la Naturaleza Scipionis CANS

70. Fundación Savia

71. Salva la Selva

**United States**

72. Defend Them All

73. Earth Law Center

74. Earthworks

75. Institute for Policy Studies - Global Economy Program

**Global**

76. The Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature (GARN)

77. Yes to Life, No to Mining Global Solidarity Network