

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The world economy's misguided and unachievable drive for infinite economic growth on a finite planet is running roughshod over the fundamental rights of people and nature. In December 2015, Earth Law Center (ELC) examined 100 "co-violations" of human and environmental rights and made recommendations on how to establish a better future for people and planet.

Since then, a wave of new, increasingly violent cases of rights co-violations has swept across the globe. Many involve acts of arrest and murder intended to silence frontline environmental defenders protecting ecosystems and communities from destruction and contamination. These acts are rarely punished, with human victims branded as enemies of "progress," and environmental victims viewed as commodities rather than life.

This 2016 update of ELC's 2015 report, *Fighting for Our Shared Future*, analyzes an additional 100 case studies that demonstrate the increasing breadth and severity of co-violations worldwide. The update also ties in new data compiled by partners working with frontline rights defenders, and proposes additional, urgently needed solutions. Among other findings, the 200 case studies collected by ELC indicate that:

- Co-violations of nature's rights and human rights are expanding across the globe, though the Global South is proportionately more affected.
- Thirty percent of the cases examined involved harm to indigenous peoples' rights, despite their comprising only five percent of the population.
- With regard to violations of nature's rights, pollution and biodiversity loss appear most often.
- Human rights violations parallel and co-exist with the expanding scope and depth of nature's rights violations. Chillingly, 28 percent of human rights violations examined involved at least one murder.
- Perpetrators include both government and economic actors – with 43 percent of cases involving both as the perpetrators.

Earth Law Center examined the 200 cases for inclusion in the report based on comparison with three international rights instruments: the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth. This report uses four representative case studies to show how these three rights agreements can be invoked to identify, prevent, and redress rights co-violations.

The case studies examine: (1) suppression of tribal and other voices opposing the dangerous Dakota Access pipeline at Standing Rock; (2) eradication of Indonesia's forests, species, and indigenous communities for massive palm oil plantations; (3) murder and violence directed towards opponents of mega-dams and other destructive projects in Honduras; and (4) the global destruction of our oceans, which is tied to violations of workers' rights within the fishing industry and other abuses.

Action is needed now to raise awareness of these co-violations of fundamental human rights

and nature's rights, and to shift our economic worldview toward one that respects rather than ignores those rights. Recommendations include, among others:

- Recognize in law and implement the fundamental rights of nature, including through U.N. General Assembly adoption of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth
- Prioritize cases before the International Criminal Court that involve co-violations of human rights and nature's rights
- Formulate an international treaty to prevent and address human rights and nature's rights violations by transnational and national business enterprises
- Provide emergency protection to at-risk environmental defenders
- Adopt a system for receiving information and reporting on violations of the rights of nature and of environmental human rights defenders

This 2016 co-violations update adds to the growing evidence of systematic human and environmental rights violations by governments and industries worldwide, as documented by dozens of reports and thousands of tragic stories – many still unheard. To prevent these harms from further destroying communities and nature, we must not only hold all perpetrators accountable. We must also transform our laws to reflect the goal of shared well-being with other humans and the natural world, rather than short-term profit for the few at the expense of the many. Together as a global community, we can achieve this vision.



Curious child in northern Nepal