

May 4, 2021

The Honorable Merrick Garland
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Via email: AskDOJ@usdoj.gov

Dear Attorney General Garland,

We Nobel Prize laureates representing all disciplines are writing you now in support of the April 27 letter from Members of Congress requesting that you immediately order a high-level Department of Justice review of an unorthodox case involving human rights lawyer Steven Donziger and that the Department reassert main jurisdiction over the case and conduct a review of the baseless charges against him.

Donziger has now been under pre-trial house arrest in Manhattan for over 600 days and counting while awaiting trial on a petty misdemeanor charge resulting from a discovery dispute in the case of the United States v. Donziger, U.S. District Court S.D.N.Y Case No. 19 Cr. 561 (LAP); 11 Civ. 691 (LAK). The current date of his contempt of court trial, which has changed several times over the 600+ days of his house arrest, is May 10 in the Southern District of New York.

In November of 2020, 55 Nobel Laureates released a [public statement](#) in support of Steven Donziger and at that time called for his release from house arrest, dismissal of the charges against him, the cessation of judicial harassment of him and assurances that any further legal actions against him be assigned to a neutral and unbiased judge. We believed then, as we do now, that as the letter to you from Members of Congress says the harassment of Donziger “involves a shameful attempt by Chevron, a multinational fossil fuel polluter, to manipulate and abuse the federal courts to silence, punish, and intimidate the defendant... because of his successful class action lawsuit in Ecuador which resulted in a \$9.5 billion judgement against Chevron on behalf of the Indigenous people of the Amazon basin who have been subjected to deadly, carcinogenic waste from oil and gas production in one of the world’s most fragile and irreplaceable regions.”

As we have stated before, we have a deep and abiding interest in peace and justice, in upholding our international system for the protection of human rights, and in protecting the environment. We do not believe that fairness and justice will be served unless the Department of Justice reviews the judicial procedures involved in this unorthodox case, reasserts main jurisdiction over the case, and conducts a review of the baseless charges against him.

We believe that a high-level investigation will reveal that the case clearly is a violation of Mr. Donziger's rights and those of the affected communities in Ecuador when a U.S. corporation is able to wrest the power from the government to prosecute the lawyer who helped to hold it accountable for human rights abuses, abetted by judges with their own conflicts of interest.

We thank you in advance for actions you and your Department take to right these wrongs.

Sincerely,

Jody Williams, Nobel Peace Prize (1997)
Thomas R. Cech, Nobel Prize in Chemistry (1989)
Aaron Ciechanover, Nobel Prize in Chemistry (2004)
Elias James Corey, Nobel Prize in Chemistry (1990)
Robert F. Curl Jr., Nobel Prize in Chemistry (1996)
Gerhard Ertl, Nobel Prize in Chemistry (2007)
Joachim Frank, Nobel Prize in Chemistry (2017)
Walter Gilbert, Nobel Prize in Chemistry (1980)
Richard Henderson, Nobel Prize in Chemistry (2017)
Dudley R. Herschbach, Nobel Prize in Chemistry (1986)
Roald Hoffmann, Nobel Prize in Chemistry (1981)
Robert Huber, Nobel Prize in Chemistry (1988)
Brian K. Kobilka, Nobel Prize in Chemistry (2012)
Roger D. Kornberg, Nobel Prize in Chemistry (2006)
Yuan T. Lee, Nobel Prize in Chemistry (1986)
Jean-Marie Lehn, Nobel Prize in Chemistry (1987)
Michael Levitt, Nobel Prize in Chemistry (2013)
Tomas Lindahl, Nobel Prize in Chemistry (2015)
Roderick MacKinnon, Nobel Prize in Chemistry (2003)
Paul L. Modrich, Nobel Prize in Chemistry (2015)
Jean-Pierre Sauvage, Nobel Prize in Chemistry (2016)
George P. Smith, Nobel Prize in Chemistry (2018)
Sir James Fraser Stoddart, Nobel Prize in Chemistry (2016)
Sir John E. Walker, Nobel Prize in Chemistry (1997)
Arieh Warshel, Nobel Prize in Chemistry (2013)
Oliver Hart, Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences (2016)
Edmund S. Phelps, Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences (2006)
Joseph E. Stiglitz, Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences (2001)
Elfriede Jelinek, Nobel Prize in Literature (2004)
Herta Muller, Nobel Prize in Literature (2009)
Alice Munro, Nobel Prize in Literature (2013)
Wole Soyinka, Nobel Prize in Literature (1986)
Mario R. Capecchi, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine (2007)
Jeffrey Connor Hall, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine (2017)
Harald zur Hausen, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine (2008)

Jules A. Hoffmann, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine (2011)
Louis J. Ignarro, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine (1998)
Barry J. Marshall, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine (2005)
Erwin Neher, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine (1991)
Charles M. Rice, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine (2020)
Sir Richard J. Roberts, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine (1993)
Michael Rosbash, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine (2017)
Randy W. Schekman, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine (2013)
Gregg L. Semenza, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine (2019)
Hamilton O. Smith, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine (1978)
Thomas C. Sudhof, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine (2013)
Jack W. Szostak, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine (2009)
J. Robin Warren, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine (2005)
Torsten N. Wiesel, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine (1981)
Mairead Corrigan-Maguire, Nobel Peace Prize (1976)
Shirin Ebadi, Nobel Peace Prize (2003)
Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, Nobel Peace Prize (1980)
Leymah Roberta Gbowee, Nobel Peace Prize (2011)
José Manuel Ramos-Horta, Nobel Peace Prize (1996)
Oscar Arias Sanchez, Nobel Peace Prize (1987)
Barry Clark Barish, Nobel Prize in Physics (2017)
J. Georg Bednorz, Nobel Prize in Physics (1987)
Jerome I. Friedman, Nobel Prize in Physics (1990)
Sheldon Glashow, Nobel Prize in Physics (1979)
John L. Hall, Nobel Prize in Physics (2005)
Wolfgang Ketterle, Nobel Prize in Physics (2001)
John C. Mather, Nobel Prize in Physics (2006)
Michel Mayor, Nobel Prize in Physics (2019)
William D. Phillips Nobel Prize in Physics (1997)
H. David Politzer, Nobel Prize in Physics (2004)
Horst L. Stormer, Nobel Prize in Physics (1998)
Daniel C. Tsui, Nobel Prize in Physics (1998)
Robert Woodrow Wilson, Nobel Prize in Physics (1978)