



RESOLUTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM

Climate change poses serious threats to future generations whose voices are not yet heard. They risk inheriting an uninhabitable planet. According to the UN, the last three years have been the hottest on record with increased incidents of extreme weather affecting millions of people, which strongly foreshadows the threatening process of continued global warming.¹ While the 2015 Paris Agreement² has been deemed a step forward, it does not do enough to keep global warming between 1,5 and 2 degrees centigrade, which is a prerequisite for preserving livelihoods in the most vulnerable countries.³

Species necessary for survival are increasingly threatened by extinction. Meanwhile, climate and environmental activists all over the world, from the Philippines to Brazil, from DR Congo to Peru and the U.S.A. face threats and persecution from state and non-state actors when they peacefully voice their concerns and protest policies and actions that risk a further deterioration of the climate and environment.⁴ For instance:

- In the U.S.A., journalists and film makers who documented the work of the activists who demanded the shut-down of oil sand pipelines in 2016 are facing criminal charges and risk hefty prison sentences, which threatens press and artistic freedom.⁵
- In Vietnam, independent journalist and blogger Nguyen Van Hoa was sentenced to seven years in prison on 27 November, for his coverage of the 2016 Formosa chemical spill;⁶ in April, Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh (also known under her pen name Mother Mushroom) was sentenced to 10 years in prison for writing about the same environmental disaster, among other things.⁷
- In India, three members of one family were murdered last May as they tried to prevent the extraction of sand from a riverbank by their village of Jatpura.⁸
- In Peru, six farmers were killed by a criminal gang who wanted to grab their land for palm oil production.

¹ Reuters, 'Last three years hottest on record, severe weather hits 2018: U.N.', 22 March 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-climatechange-un/last-three-years-hottest-on-record-severe-weather-hits-2018-u-n-idUSKBN1GY01D>.

² The Paris Agreement, <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>.

³ The Independent, 'COP21: Paris deal far too weak to prevent devastating climate change, academics, warn', 8 January 2016, <https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/climate-change/cop21-paris-deal-far-too-weak-to-prevent-devastating-climate-change-academics-warn-a6803096.html>.

⁴ Reuters, 'Trump threat fires up U.S. climate activists, draws in more', 11 November 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-environmentalists-idUSKBN1362EU>.

⁵ The Guardian, 'Anti-pipeline activists and film-makers face prison, raising fears for free press', 30 January 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/30/anti-pipeline-activists-and-film-makers-face-prison-raising-fears-for-free-press>.

⁶ Mongabay, 'Citizen journalist jailed 7 years for reporting environmental disaster in Vietnam', 1 December 2017, <https://news.mongabay.com/2017/12/citizen-journalist-jailed-7-years-for-reporting-environmental-disaster-in-vietnam/>.

⁷ PEN International, 'Take action for Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh', 30 October 2017, <http://pen-international.org/news/take-action-for-nguyen-ngoc-nhu-quynh>.

⁸ The Guardian, 'Villagers pay tragic price as Indian building boom drives demand for sand', 30 December 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/30/india-sand-mining-conflict-deaths-building-boom-environmental-damage>.

All over the world, an increasing number of those who raise their voices and act in defence of their habitat, are killed. According to the Guardian, 197 defenders of the environment were killed in 2017⁹ and 66 have been killed so far in 2018 (at the time of writing, 30 July 2018). Most killings occur in remote forest areas, particularly in Latin-America. At the current rate, approximately four environmentalists might be killed every week this year.¹⁰

The Assembly of Delegates of PEN International calls on the leaders of all states:

- to take measures to protect the rights to freedom of expression and of association and other human rights that enable activists to raise their voices and engage with climate/environment issues, and to contribute to an atmosphere in which they can speak and peacefully express their dissent and protest freely, without facing threats, persecution and violence;
- to respect and protect the rights to freedom of expression and to access to information of journalists and writers engaged with documenting threats against global environment and climate, so that they can pursue their vital role in informing the public debate on these matters, unhampered by violence, threats, undue restrictions and censorship.

⁹ The Guardian, 'The defenders: Almost four environmental defenders a week killed in 2017', 2 February 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/feb/02/almost-four-environmental-defenders-a-week-killed-in-2017?CMP=share_btn_tw.

¹⁰ The Guardian, 'The defenders: 66 environmental defenders have been killed so far in 2018 while protecting their community's land or natural resources', 17 July 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/ng-interactive/2018/feb/27/the-defenders-recording-the-deaths-of-environmental-defenders-around-the-world>.