

**PUBLIC STATEMENT**

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## **Honduras: Authorities must guarantee due process for human rights defenders**

Amnesty International expresses its concern about the preventive detention of 12 human rights defenders who are campaigning to protect the Carlos Escaleras National Park, a protected area, from a mining project. The Honduran state must guarantee an independent and impartial investigation that observes all due process guarantees for these people. Amnesty International also reminds the authorities that preventive imprisonment should only be used in exceptional circumstances, when there is a serious risk of absconding, or potential harm to victims or witnesses, or if it is likely that the accused might tamper with evidence or interfere with the investigation itself.

On 21 February 2019, 18 members of the Guapinol community and the Tocoa Municipal Committee for the Defence of Public Assets voluntarily reported to the La Ceiba courts, in response to a summons from the Office of the Attorney General in October 2018, for alleged offences of trespass and damage. The defenders' lawyers told Amnesty International they had not received any other summons and that they and the defenders were therefore surprised to find a second summons had been issued to them and a further 13 people, a total of 31 people, all accused of unlawful imprisonment, aggravated arson, theft and unlawful association. On the following day, they were brought before a judge under national jurisdiction who ordered the imprisonment of one female defender and 11 male defenders. Since 24 February, these 12 human rights defenders are in preventive imprisonment and awaiting trial.

The Guapinol community and the Tocoa Municipal Committee for the Defence of Public Assets oppose the operating permit issued to the mining company Inversiones Los Pinares in the Carlos Escalera National Park, formerly known as Montaña de Botaderos, in the municipality of Tocoa. On 1 August 2018, local residents set up a camp to protest about the permit. They claim the project is illegal because the site is in the core zone of a protected area where the water sources on which they depend for their survival are located. They also criticize the reduction of the core zone by legislative decree in 2013, a move that allowed the project site to remain outside the protected area.