



To

Juan Carlos Varela Rodríguez, President of the Republic of Panama

Isabel de Saint Malo de Alvarado, Vice President and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Panama

Nanno Kleiterp, Chief Executive Officer of the Dutch Development Bank (FMO)

Dr. Nick Rischbieth, Executive President of the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI)

Bruno Wenn, Chairman of the German Development Bank (DEG)

Dear Juan Carlos Varela Rodríguez,

Dear Isabel de Saint Malo de Alvarado,

Dear Nanno Kleiterp

Dear Nick Rischbieth,

Dear Bruno Wenn,

RE: Panama: don't evict Ngäbe families for the Barro Blanco dam

I am deeply concerned by the imminent threat of forceful eviction of the Ngäbe communities affected by the Barro Blanco dam. These communities have challenged the project at every stage and continue to call for its cancellation. Given the previous conflicts and violence against people who oppose Barro Blanco, and considering the imminent completion of the dam, there is urgent, serious concern for the personal safety and security of these environmental and indigenous rights defenders.

Once completed, the Barro Blanco dam is projected to flood six hectares of Ngäbe indigenous territories including homes and schools, resulting in the forced relocation of many families, as well as the destruction of religious, historical, and cultural sites, which threatens the Ngäbe's cultural heritage. Despite these impacts, the Panamanian government approved the project without adequately assessing the project's environmental impacts or ensuring that the affected communities had given their consent.

Acknowledging these shortcomings, the Panamanian environmental agency, ANAM, decided to temporarily suspend the construction of the then-95% complete dam in February, 2015. The suspension, pending an investigation by ANAM, was justified because of shortcomings in the agreement with the locally affected communities. In September 2015, the Panamanian administration concluded its investigation and officially recognized the concessionary, GENISA, as guilty of failing to reach agreement with the affected stakeholders. As a consequence, the company was sanctioned with a fine amounting \$775,000. The completion of the investigation lifted the suspension and construction resumed.

Despite official recognition of and sanction for the rights violations surrounding the project, including the lack of consultation, construction proceeds because the government declared that the completion of the project was a matter of national interest.

The local affected communities now fear that security forces will attempt to forcibly evict them from their lands, thus putting their physical safety at risk. Approximately 270 indigenous people are threatened with forced evictions. These evictions would violate the Ngäbe's human rights to adequate housing; property; free, prior and informed consent; food, water and means of subsistence; culture; and education.

Given the real and urgent threat of physical harm and illegal evictions, the international community calls on President Varela and relevant authorities to:

*****Ensure that the Ngäbe are free from intimidation and repression**

*****Suspend the eviction process and reach an agreement with the local affected communities even if that means cancellation of the project, as required by Panama's obligations under international law.**

Kind regards,

This petition has been signed by 105.154 persons worldwide.