

## **U.S. Congressional Representatives and Senators Recognize the Work of the Tocoa Municipal Committee in Defense of Common and Public Goods, Lament the Harassment and Criminalization Faced for Their Commitment To Support the Struggle**

The U.S. Congresswoman Ilhan Omar congratulated the Tocoa Municipal Committee in Defense of Common and Public Goods in the ceremony for the Letelier-Moffitt International Human Rights Award given by the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C. on October 3rd this year. Congresswoman Omar referred to the members of the committee as:

*“Brave defenders that are risking their lives in order to protect their communities...(and) continue fighting despite repression from a dictatorship that maintains power only with the support of the United States.”*

Similarly, Senator Patrick Leahy released a public declaration congratulating the Municipal Committee, which will be read during the symbolic presentation of the prize in Honduras on Friday, October 18, in Tocoa, Colón. In this statement, Senator Leahy recognizes their work, and regrets that violent response of the Honduran state:

*“The Committee and its members have worked to defend the Guapinol River through repeated calls to Honduran authorities to respect the law and hold a binding consultation with the municipality. When those calls were ignored, you exercised your right to peaceful protest, for which you were forcibly evicted by members of the military and police who responded with violence. As a result of your opposition to the mining concessions granted to the Los Pinares Company, located in protected areas and the water sources of the Mountain Botaderos Carlos Escalante National Park, you have been criminalized, like many Honduran environmental defenders who have been harassed, threatened, and assassinated. Seven of your members are imprisoned.”*

Both representatives confirmed the international attention that the struggle for the defense of the Guapinol River is receiving and their commitment to see justice prevail. In the words of the Congresswoman:

*“As part of the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee, I promise my support to defend your human and environmental rights. I will be at your side, supporting you as you fight to recover the democracy in your beloved country.”*

The Letelier-Moffitt Award is a recognition given by the Institute for Policy Studies annually over 43 years to individuals and groups that champion the struggle for human rights in the Americas. This recognition is in memory of Chilean ambassador Orlando Letelier and his American assistant, Ronni Karpen Moffitt, murdered in Washington D.C. on the orders of the Pinochet dictatorship on September 21, 1976.