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Press Release

Online public hearing on the Vaca Muerta case, Argentina
Wednesday, August 14, 2024

The International Rights of Nature Tribunal convened a Virtual Public Hearing on Tuesday, August 13, 2024, to address the economic, social, and environmental impacts of the Vaca Muerta megaproject, one of the largest unconventional hydrocarbon deposits in the world. The hearing aimed to update the state of play on Argentina's energy policy, especially concerning the production of fossil fuels and the rise of the extreme right in the country. In addition, the case was extended to the oil pipeline and the oil port in the San Matías Gulf.

Following the visit of a delegation from the Tribunal to the affected provinces in March and April 2023, where on-site surveys and analyses were carried out, the local communities presented the judges of the Tribunal with an update on the case, gathering new testimonies to collect additional evidence for the presentation of their verdict in the coming months. The hearing focused on the situation of environmental and territory defenders in the region. These testimonies were heard by the judges, and will later be reflected in their verdict.

The recording of the hearing is available for viewing on YouTube [here](#). For more information on the Vaca Muerta case, the delegation's visit, and the impacts of fracking in the region, click [here](#).

The Tribunal visit

Between March 29 and April 5, 2023, a delegation of judges from the International Rights of Nature Tribunal visited Vaca Muerta, in the Argentinian provinces of Neuquén and Río Negro. The visit focused on the environmental and human rights impacts of the expansion of the extractive fracking industry in the region.

During the visit, the delegation met with representatives of the government, oil companies, social organizations, and communities affected by the activity. The agenda includes visits to the province of Neuquén, where the Vaca Muerta megaproject and the oil companies are located; to the oil dumps of Neuquén Capital and Añelo, where contamination and illegal storage of toxic waste from fracking have been reported; to the Ruca Mapuche, to assess the impacts on the territory and the rights of Indigenous Peoples; and to the town of Sauzal Bonito, where



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seismic movements have been recorded and the relationship between fracking and earthquakes has been questioned.

At the end of the visit, the delegation presented a [report of the findings](#) at a meeting in the Chamber of Deputies of Argentina.

The Rights of Nature Tribunal

The International Rights of Nature Tribunal is an international institution created by citizens to investigate and publicize violations of the Rights of Nature. The Tribunal creates a forum for people from around the world to speak out on behalf of Nature, to protest the destruction of the Earth - destruction encouraged by corporations with the blessing of governments - and thus the Tribunal makes conflicts and their actors visible and makes legal recommendations on the protection and restoration of the Earth as model jurisprudence for grassroots communities. The Tribunal also focuses on supporting indigenous peoples to raise their voices and share the impacts they see on their territories as stewards of the Earth.

The Tribunal has heard cases in Ecuador, Peru, France, Spain, England, Germany, the Balkans, French Guyana, Brazil, and Canada, fracking in the United States, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Australia, and Mexico, and against oil companies such as Total, Chevron Texaco, Shell, British Petroleum and mining companies such as Newmont Mining Corporation, ECSA, Vale, among others.

The Tribunal's verdicts, if applied at the highest level, could provide a necessary tool in the fight for environmental justice.

To learn more about the Rights of Nature Tribunal, click [here](#).

For more information about this Tribunal delegation visit, click [here](#).

List of judges present at the hearing:

- Alberto Acosta (Ecuador)
- Yuvelis Morales (Colombia)
- Rafael Colombo (Argentina)
- Claudia Aboaf (Argentina)
- Patricia Gualinga (Ecuador)



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- Enrique Viale (Argentina)

Presenters:

- Lexfaru Nahuel - Mapuche Confederation of Neuquén
- Walter Pérez - Asamblea por los Derechos Humanos de Neuquén (Human Rights Assembly of Neuquén)
- Bruno Vadalá - Asamblea por los Derechos Humanos de Neuquén (Human Rights Assembly of Neuquén)
- Fernando Cabrera - Southern Petroleum Observatory
- Aylén Tapia - Multisectorial Golfo San Matías - Leufuche Territory
- Fabricio Di Giacomo - Multisectorial Gulf San Matias

Secretariat: Natalia Greene (Secretary of the Tribunal).

Coordination: Francesco Martone (Coordinator of the Assembly of Judges of the Tribunal and member of the Jury)

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