



Dear Friends of RSI

I'm excited to share news about our growing work to connect environmental defenders worldwide with one another, and stop governments from wrongly treating them as terrorists. This problem has become a worldwide trend, with states expanding their criminal laws and arresting leaders and activists as 'security' threats. Especially for the women, land rights and Indigenous activists who are often at the heart of the organising, the situation is increasingly risky.

In our view, a key driver of this trend is the fact that international institutions, too – including the UN – have embraced the language of 'terrorism' and 'extremism', while minimising human rights and human welfare. The language we see emerging at the highest levels of the international order is providing states with cover to invoke overly broad and loosely defined 'security' rationales, such as 'states of emergency', to suppress any movement they don't like.

'Security' narratives are also closely connected with discrimination, as governments and their police forces use it to reinforce existing racial, gendered, religious and other hierarchies within societies. Those practices entrench inequalities while letting governments avoid doing the hard yards of actual violence prevention, which requires a commitment of resources, expertise and political capital.

After years of preliminary research and network-building, we began a new project in 2025 to bring together environmental defenders from countries in Latin America, Southeast Asia and East Africa where governments have been misusing 'security' or 'counter-terrorism' laws to repress climate justice movements. At the moment, we are interviewing directly impacted activists and learning a great deal, while doing other research on these contexts; we are also proud to be supporting a new advisory committee for this work comprised of environmental defenders and others with direct experience from around the world – about 10 different countries in total.

Our plan is to convene a range of environmental defenders from these regions in Peru in autumn 2026, so we all have a chance to learn from each other in person – a rare opportunity for people who are so geographically dispersed – while doing 'blue sky' thinking about fresh advocacy tactics that don't rely on UN action. We are hearing from activists that this work can be isolating, and we look forward to seeing the creative ideas and shared tactical knowledge that a convening like this can generate. Our hope is to identify and support advocacy plans aimed at new targets, as well as potentially impactful new narratives and alliances.

One of the joys -- and advantages -- of being a small charity is that we have the opportunity to consider fresh ideas and projects, based on processes we can adapt in light of the latest understandings of what it means to take an ethical, equality-based, non-extractive approach. We're fortunate to have a skilled team that's relentlessly dedicated to finding new ways forward on these difficult issues, and we can't wait to see what emerges from the convening and as well as other conversations in the runup to it.

We look forward to bringing you further updates regarding this exciting area of work, as it develops.

Yours sincerely

Sarah St Vincent
Executive Director



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