
Prize to Honduran activist

Jorge Varela, co-founder of the Committee for the Defence and Development of Flora and Fauna of the Fonseca Gulf (CODEFFAGOLF), a grassroot organization of small fishers and peasants in Honduras, is one of the seven environmental and human rights activists that have been awarded with the Goldman Prize 1999. This NGO has focused its activities in the defence of the Fonseca Gulf area against industrial shrimp farming, that has provoked the destruction of mangroves and other coastal wetlands, the pollution of estuaries, the loss of fisheries and the shortage of food for local villagers. As concrete results of its struggle CODEFFAGOLF has achieved two moratorium to temporarily halt shrimp farms' activities and is about to obtain the declaration by the government of 107,000 hectares of coastal wetlands and marine ecosystems as protected areas. Additionally, the organization has played a crucial role in helping the population affected by Hurricane Mitch. In July 1997 the Oxford Office of the WRM addressed the president of Honduras asking him an extension of the moratorium on shrimp farming in the area. In December 1997 by means of a letter addressed to the National Congress of Honduras, the WRM International Secretariat supported the inclusion of the Fonseca Gulf into the National Protected Areas System.

Every year, the Goldman Environmental Foundation, based in San Francisco, USA, gives awards to anonymous activists engaged in the defence of human and environmental worldwide. A Canadian fisherman advocating for sustainable exploitation of codfish in Terranova, two aboriginal women of Australia that have faced uranium mining activities in Jabiluka, a young woman belonging to the Karen ethnic minority in Burma engaged in the defence of her country's people and forests, an activist of Cameroon who defends the second largest tropical forest in the world, and a Slovakian hydrologist that is opposing a dam megaproject are the other individuals that will receive the Goldman Prize 1999. A token of the thousands of activists at different levels that fight for a more sustainable and humane world.

Source: Honduras Popular Support Group, 22/4/99;