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July 1, 2002

William H. Taft  
Legal Advisor  
Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Taft:

We are writing in regards to the US District Court request that the State Department comment on the lawsuit Doe vs. Exxon Mobil Corporation, Case No. 01-CV-1357 LFO. The case was filed by Indonesian villagers who allege they were victims of human rights abuses by Exxon Mobil's security force. Judge Oberdorfer of the US District Court for the District of Columbia sent you a letter dated May 10, 2002 soliciting the views of the State Department as to whether litigation of this case "would impact adversely on the interests of the United States." Specifically, the defendant is arguing that because the case involves alleged human rights violations committed by security forces in Indonesia, the nation that is home to the largest Islamic population in the world, continued litigation would compromise the U.S. government's war on terrorism. We write to express our concern and urge you not to prevent the case from going forward.

We do not believe that litigation involving allegations of human rights abuses against Exxon Mobil, a private company operating in Indonesia, will adversely affect the interests of the United States. However, we do believe it would negatively impact an important continuing State Department initiative, the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights. Other companies in the extractive and energy sectors have worked with the State Department to develop these principles to guide them in maintaining the safety and security of their operations within a framework that ensures respect for human rights.

Intervention by the State Department in this private litigation would send the message that the United States supports the climate of impunity for human rights abuses in Indonesia, and does not support efforts by American extractive companies to develop and implement policies that promote and protect human rights.

We strongly urge the State Department to not intervene in the litigation of this case.

Sincerely,

Michael Posner  
Executive Director, Lawyers Committee for Human Rights

Cc: Lorne Craner, Colin Powell

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