

URGENT ACTION

DEFENDER THREATENED FOR WORK WITH CAMPESINOS Human rights defender and social leader Rubén Ortiz is suffering from constant threats and intimidation related to his support for the rights of peasant farmer (*campesino*) communities and workers in Misiones province, Argentina.

Rubén Ortiz is a human rights defender, union representative and teacher, a member of the Pedagogical Liberation Movement (Movimiento Pedagógico de Liberación, MPL), the Autonomous Argentine Workers' Central Union (Central de Trabajadores de la Argentina-Autónoma, CTA) and the Campesino Liberation Movement (Movimiento Campesino de Liberación, MCL) in the city of Montecarlo, Misiones province. A multinational paper factory has been set up in the area which seriously affects the agricultural crops of yerba mate, citrus fruits and cassava, obstructing access to land and work for the *campesino* communities.

According to Rubén Ortiz, since 26 August he and his family (his wife, Iris Schmidt and his two sons, Lautaro and Facundo) have received threatening calls and messages on a daily basis related to his work within the *campesino* movement. He has been threatened and intimidated via telephone, receiving up to 60 calls in one day, including death threats. He has been told to stop his advisory work with *campesinos* and workers immediately, and has received messages such as "we are going to send the guys after you", "we want your head", or "we are going to do away with you". Niripil Luján and Deolinda Arce, two other members of MPL, have recently received similar threats from the same telephone numbers.

Rubén Ortiz has reported several of these threats to the police. However on 26 August police officers refused to take his statement, saying that "the person responsible for that is not here". It was only after the threats were published on social networks and in local media that they were able to lodge the relevant complaint, which has now been brought before the Second Court of First Instance in El Dorado, Misiones province. Remarkably, Rubén continued to receive threatening calls to his phone while he was in the police station giving his statement, within earshot of the police officers. Two people were arrested on 8 September 2016 for the reported incidents. Notably, the calls stopped during the period of time that they were detained for, and began again immediately after they were released.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY, in Spanish or your own language:

- Urging the Argentine authorities to implement the measures necessary to effectively protect and guarantee the physical integrity of Rubén Ortiz and his family, in accordance with their wishes;
- Calling on them to carry out a comprehensive and impartial investigation into the threats against Rubén Ortiz and his family, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;
- Urging them to ensure that human rights defenders can carry out their work in a safe environment without fear of reprisal.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 NOVEMBER 2016 TO:

Argentine Domestic Security Secretary
Sr. Gerardo Milman
Gelly y Obes 2289, CP 1425
Buenos Aires, Argentina
Tel: +54 (011) 4943-9881
Twitter: @gmilman
Email: privadassi@minseg.gov.ar
Salutation: Dear Secretary/Sr. Secretario

Governor of the province of Misiones
Hugo Passalacqua
Félix de Azara 1749, CP 3300
Posadas, Misiones, Argentina
Fax: +54 (0376) 4447056 / 4447020 / 4447030
Twitter: @passalacquaok
Email: privadagobmisiones@gmail.com
Salutation: Dear Governor/Sr. Gobernador

Provincial Government Minister for Misiones
Marcelo Gabriel Pérez
Félix de Azara 1749, CP 3300
Posadas, Misiones, Argentina
Fax: +54 (0376) 4444167 / 4444168
Email: mg_secprivada@misiones.gov.ar; ministrodegobierno@misiones.gov.ar
Salutation: Dear Minister/Sr. Ministro

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Rubén Ortiz has worked for years advising and providing training for *campesino* and worker communities on labour exploitation, with a focus on access to land and use of natural resources.

He is the head of the Misiones Social Movement Political Training School (Escuela de Formación Política del Movimiento Social) where he provides *campesino* communities with advice. He also participated in the creation of a *campesino* union (MCL) which fights for yerba crop income and promotes self-cultivation, and he organized the creation of a teacher's union (MPL) which he actively participates in. Both the MCL and the MPL belong to the Argentine Workers' Central Union, one of the largest unions in Argentina which comprises unions and social organizations from throughout the country.

Rubén Ortiz has been receiving death threats since 2012. These were reported to the authorities but they have not proceeded with the investigation. Rubén Ortiz, his family and the members of MPL believe that this is due to the involvement of agricultural companies.

It is common practice in Latin America for human rights defenders to be subjected to persecution, threats and attacks. Human rights defenders working on issues related to land, territory and natural resources face particular risks and are one of the most widely-attacked groups in the region.

The threats, attacks and killings suffered by human rights defenders are rarely investigated by the authorities and those responsible are rarely punished, which sends the message that these acts are tolerated and can be committed without any consequences.

Name: Rubén Ortiz
Gender m/f: male

Further information on UA: 221/16 Index: AMR 13/4904/2016 Issue Date: 5 October 2016