

URGENT ACTION

INDIGENOUS LAND DEFENDER ATTACKED

Qom indigenous leader Bernarda Pesoa was physically assaulted on her community lands in Benjamín Aceval municipality, Paraguay, on 27 October by a group of approximately 9 women and men after she opposed works for a eucalyptus plantation in the community's territory. The communities have not been properly consulted by the project developers to ensure their free, prior and informed consent. State authorities must urgently investigate the attack against Bernarda and provide her with protection.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Dr. Sandra Raquel Quiñonez Astigarraga
Office of the Public Prosecutor of Paraguay

Chile esq. Avda. Ygatimi

Asunción

Paraguay

Tel: +595 (021) 415 5000

Email: comunicaciones@ministeriopublico.gov.py

Twitter: @MinPublicoPy

Dear General Prosecutor:

I am alarmed to hear that Bernarda Pesoa, leader of an indigenous Qom community, was attacked by a group of approximately 9 people on 27 October, leaving wounds on her face and head.

The attackers, members of a neighbouring community according to Bernarda, threatened to burn her house and to further harm her. Relatives of the attackers have an agreement with a private foundation that recommenced work for a eucalyptus plantation on the communal lands that pertain to Bernarda's and other communities. Bernarda and other indigenous leaders oppose the plantation on environmental and cultural grounds and are concerned that all communities have not given their consent for the project.

I urge you to ensure a prompt, independent and exhaustive investigation into the attack against Bernarda Pesoa, as well as ensuring protection for Bernarda and her family.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Bernarda Pesoa belongs to the Organization of Peasant and Indigenous Women – CONAMURI- and the group of artisans of her community of Santa Rosa. She has participated in activities for the defense of land and environment for the past 28 years along with other members of the Qom people. According to Bernarda, the Qom people were originally forest dwellers and hunter and gatherers for their subsistence, and since the 1970s they have been living on the community land where they now live. They make a living through making artisan products from local plants as well as through small scale subsistence activities breeding animals such as goats, sheep and chickens. Their lands have been affected in recent years by the encroachment of cattle ranchers and private companies who seek to carry out projects that would affect local ecosystems.

Fundación Paraguaya is a private foundation that is developing a project for a eucalyptus plantation on approximately 20 hectares in the community district of San Francisco Asis, in which Bernarda's community is located. The Foundation [says that it reached an agreement](#) with two community leaders of San Francisco. Nevertheless, the community lands of San Francisco pertain to 8 communities and their communal agreements stipulate that that all communities must be consulted about matters that affect their land. Various leaders, including Bernarda, have denounced that in the area where the eucalyptus is to be planted, there are medicinal plants, native trees, native species that they use for their consumption and for making handicrafts. They also highlight the loss of biodiversity, the drying up of the soil by erosion and the effect on the use of water in the area that would come from introducing this monoculture plantation into the native ecosystem. According to the Fundación Paraguaya, the project aims to sell biomass and wood from the eucalypts over the next ten years.

Community leaders have denounced their concern over the planned eucalypt plantation, including with complaints made and [a hearing with the Commission of Natural Resources of the Paraguayan Senate](#). In addition, it is important to note that the Paraguayan Institute for Indigenous Peoples (INDI), [confirmed](#) on 28 October that no process of free, prior and informed consent has been carried out in relation to the eucalyptus plantation planned by Fundación Paraguaya. Paraguay is a state party to Convention 169 of the ILO and has integrated the binding obligations of this treaty into its national legal system, which calls on projects that affect indigenous communities to be consulted to ensure their free, prior and informed consent before any projects go ahead.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 23 December 2020

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Bernarda Pesoa (She, her)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: n/a