

URGENT ACTION

FEAR FOR SAFETY OF ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISTS

There are growing concerns for the safety of Carlos Zorrilla, an environmental activist in Ecuador, and others who have protested against development projects in the northern region of Intag. These concerns come after Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa repeatedly attacked their activities during his weekly addresses to the nation.

Carlos Zorrilla is a founding member of Intag Environmental Defense and Conservation (Defensa y Conservación Ecológica de Intag, DECOIN), an organization working to protect the ecosystem of Intag, a region in northern Ecuador rich in subtropical forests and biodiversity. For many years Carlos Zorrilla has participated in local initiatives to oppose mining activities which would harm the region's environment and has initiated alternative development projects to mining.

On 14 September Intag community members who oppose mining in the area blocked access of National Mining Agency employees to enter part of Intag. They planned to take samples for an environmental assessment of the area. According to Carlos Zorrilla he was not in the area at the time.

Two weeks later on 28 September, President Rafael Correa broadcast photos and details of Intag activists, including Carlos Zorrilla, during his weekly televised address to the nation. He characterized their activities as "destabilizing" and as foreign-led interference with government policies. During another televised speech on 7 December, the President accused Carlos Zorrilla and other individuals again of defending foreign interests and called on the Ecuadorians to react.

The concern for the safety of Carlos Zorrilla and others named during the presidential speeches are reinforced by the sudden police closure of environmental organization Fundación Pachama on 4 December and failure of government officials to allow such organizations and activists to carry out their activities (see additional information).

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the government of Ecuador to refrain from arbitrarily accusing Carlos Zorrilla and other human rights defenders of destabilizing activities, as this may lead to indiscriminate retaliation against them;
- Expressing concern that these government declarations could deter others from engaging in public actions to defend human rights;
- Reminding them that States have the responsibility to protect human rights defenders and create the conditions necessary to ensure that they can carry out their legitimate activities without any unfair restrictions or fear of reprisals, as established in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 23 JANUARY 2014 TO:

President of Ecuador
Rafael Correa Delgado
Presidente de la República
García Moreno N10-43 entre Chile y
Espejo, Quito, Pichincha, Ecuador
Twitter: @MashiRafael
**Salutation: Dear President / Sr.
Presidente**

And copies to:
Americas Programme
Amnesty International
Email: ecupeve@amnesty.org

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

On 4 December police officers closed the offices of Fundación Pachamama, an Ecuadorian NGO working on Indigenous Peoples and environmental rights. The closure order alleged that the organization was interfering in public policies and threatening the security of the state. The organization has denied any involvement in violent acts. Other organizations may be at risk of closure. See UA 326/13, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR28/003/2013/en>.

Recently approved Executive Decree 16 (Decreto Ejecutivo 16) of 4 June 2013 grants the President of Ecuador wide powers to monitor and dissolve NGOs and could be used to further criminalize the right to protest. The decree has been opposed by national and international organizations for restricting the freedom of association since the terms are so broad that it can be used arbitrarily by the authorities to dissolve organizations that are critical of public policies or legitimately oppose certain government activities that they consider could violate rights. The Decree does not have a procedure that is respectful of due process for the closure of organizations and does not give NGOs the opportunity to defend themselves and contest the charges before being closed.

Between 2008 and 2010, the failure of the authorities to ensure that Indigenous Peoples and *campesinos* were consulted before passing legislation on mining and water rights sparked a series of nationwide protests. In response, the authorities used criminal proceedings against defenders and leaders who had participated in the protests. These proceedings seemed designed to prevent and punish legitimate protest and to silence those campaigning for the human rights of their communities. See the report '*So that no one can demand anything: Criminalizing the right to protest in Ecuador?*' (AI Index: AMR 28/002/2012)

A recent resolution of the UN Human Rights Council on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders calls on States to ensure that legislation designed to guarantee public safety and public order contains clearly defined provisions consistent with international human rights law, and that such legislation is not used to impede or restrict the exercise of any human right, including freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, which are essential for the promotion and protection of other rights (A/HRC/RES/22/6).

Name: Carlos Zorrilla (m), members of DECOIN and other environmental rights defenders in Intag
Gender m/f: both

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