

URGENT ACTION

ARBITRARY DETENTION IN PARAGUAY

Peasant leader Miguel Angel Correa Franco was arrested on 15 June in connection with the killing of six police officers during a violent eviction of landless peasants in eastern Paraguay. No reliable evidence has been presented to prove his involvement in the killings or his presence in the area of the clashes.

On 15 June a violent clash between police and landless peasants in Curuguaty district, Canindeyú department, Paraguay, ended up with at least 17 people dead including six police officers and 11 peasants. Shortly afterwards 13 people, including two minors, were arrested in connection with the deaths as a result of the clashes.

One of the detainees is **Miguel Angel Correa Franco** from the Luz Bella community, San Pedro department. A police statement reportedly from the time of his arrest states he was arrested at the place of the incidents. However, Miguel Angel Correa Franco claims that he was not present when the clashes happened and that he was detained by police officers as he arrived at a hospital in Curuguaty. He had gone there because he received a phone call from a friend asking him to go to the hospital to check if a relative injured during the clashes was there. He argues that he was beaten in custody and faced death threats by the police. On 17 June he was transferred to prison Coronel Oviedo where he was allowed to see a lawyer. He is now facing murder charges among other charges.

Miguel Angel Correa Franco's defence lawyer has requested his release on three occasions arguing that there is not enough evidence of his involvement in the clashes and subsequent police killings and that he was elsewhere during the incidents. The local prosecutor has recommended Miguel Angel Correa Franco's release stating that there is no evidence to charge him. The requests have been rejected by both local and appeal court judges.

According to reports, a preliminary investigation into the incident on 15 June by the Prosecutor's Office and the police has been handed over to the Paraguayan authorities. However the investigation has not been made public and it is unclear whether it contains actions to fully investigate all killings, including those of the 11 peasants.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to immediately release Miguel Angel Correa Franco since there appear to be no evidence of him having committed a crime;
- Calling on the authorities to fully investigate the allegations of torture and death threats against Miguel Angel Correa Franco while in detention on 15 and 16 June and for those responsible to be brought to justice.
- Calling on the authorities to carry out an impartial and independent investigation into all the killings in Curuguaty and for those responsible to be brought to justice in compliance with due process and fair trial.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 AUGUST 2012 TO:

Minister of Interior

Sr. Carmelo Caballero
Ministro del Interior
Chile 1002 e/ Manduvira,
Asuncion, Paraguay
Fax: +595 21 450027

**Salutation: Dear Minister/Señor
Ministro**

General Prosecutor

Dr. Javier Díaz Verón
Fiscal General
Chile e/Rodriguez de Francia Asuncion,
Paraguay
Fax: +595 21 4156000155

**Salutation: Dear General
Prosecutor/Señor Fiscal General**

And copies to:

NGO
Sobrevivencia
Isabel la Católica 1867
Casilla de Correos 1380
Asunción- Paraguay

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 15 June 2012 the police attempted to evict several landless peasants who were occupying a piece of land (Hacienda Morombi) in Curuguaty. According to the police, they were ambushed by armed men who killed six police officers. The police shot back as a response to the attacks. At least 17 people died during the clashes, 11 of whom were peasants. The exact causes of the incident remain unknown and there is no information available that indicates that the killings of the peasants are going to be investigated alongside the police homicides.

The opposition blamed Fernando Lugo and the former Interior Ministry for the police operation that led to the killings of the police officers in Curuguaty. A week after the killings Fernando Lugo was forced to step down as President of Paraguay after an impeachment against him by the Parliament.

Miguel Correa Franco has been working for the Agriculture Ministry for over a month and claims he doesn't have anything to do with the landless peasants' protests of the past 15 June in Curuguaty. Since 2009 Miguel participated in environmental and agricultural workshops carried out by the local NGO Sobrevivencia in partnership with Friends of the Earth (Amigos de la Tierra) in Paraguay.

Name: Miguel Angel Correa Franco

Gender: Male

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