

URGENT ACTION

THREATS DENY COMMUNITY ACCESS TO RESEARCH

On 7 August, violence and threats in the remote northern Argentinian town of La Leonesa stopped community activists hearing a talk by a renowned scientist about his findings of the health impact of chemicals sprayed on rice and soya crops.

On Saturday 7 August, community activists from La Leonesa, a small town located within an area of large scale rice production in the Argentinian Chaco Department, went to attend a talk that was to be given by Professor Andres Carrasco, a scientist and doctor from the Buenos Aires University Medical School. A delegation of two provincial deputies, a former public official and members of the neighbouring community of Resistencia also came to La Leonesa to hear the talk. Professor Andres Carrasco's research, concluded in 2009, highlighted the negative effects of glyphosate, a commonly-used agro-chemical, on embryos.

On arrival in La Leonesa at around 4pm, the delegation headed for the school where the talk was due to take place. However, the talk was suspended because the delegation was attacked by a group of around 100 people who threatened them and beat them. One person has since suffered from lower body paralysis after being hit on his spine, and another is undergoing neurological examinations after receiving blows to the head. The former provincial Sub-Secretary of Human Rights, Marcelo Salgado, was struck in the face and left unconscious. Dr Carrasco and his colleague shut themselves in a car, and were surrounded by people making violent threats and beating the car for two hours. Members of the community were injured and a journalist's camera equipment was damaged.

Members of the community who witnessed the incident have implicated local officials in the attack, as well as a local rice-producer and his workers and security guards. They strongly believe that the violence was promoted by them, and motivated by the powerful economic interests behind local agro-industry. Despite calls to local authorities asking for help, the police were slow to respond and failed to send sufficient reinforcements to stop the violence.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Call for an impartial investigation of the violence in La Leonesa on 7 August and prosecution of all those responsible, with particular focus on the possible involvement of local authorities in instigating or encouraging the violence and/or failing to prevent or halt violence by third parties;
- Call for swift action to ensure the safety and security of the residents of La Leonesa and neighbouring communities;
- Urge local authorities to protect the right to freedom of information and expression in order to allow the communities living in agro-industrial areas to seek, receive and disseminate information, including in public forums, around the possible effects of widespread spraying of crops;
- Where credible evidence regarding the negative health impact of spraying of agro-chemicals exists, health authorities must carry out monitoring and investigations in line with their responsibility to respect the right to health.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 22 SEPTEMBER 2010 TO:

Sr. Gobernador

Jorge Milton Capitanich

Gobierno del Pueblo de la Provincia del

Chaco, Marcelo T. Alvear 145

Resistencia, Chaco

CP3500, Argentina

Fax: +54 9 3722 434 202

Email: diego.bernachea@chaco.gov.ar

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador

Minister of Interior

Cdr. Anibal Florencio Randazzo

25 de Mayo 101/145

C1002ABC – Buenos Aires

Argentina

Fax: +54 11 4345 3336

Email: info@mininterior.gov.ar

Salutation: Sr. Ministro

And copies to:

Dr Juan Luis Manzar

Ministro de Salud

Av. 9 de Julio 1925

Cdad. Aut. de Buenos Aires

C1073ABA

Fax: 00 54 11 4381 6075

Email: consultas@msal.gov.ar

Salutation: Sr. Ministro

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In April 2009, Dr Andres Carrasco finalised his 15-month study into the impact of glyphosate, a herbicide commonly used on soya and rice crops. His findings pointed at the negative effects of glyphosate- in doses much lower than those used in agro-industry- on the morphology of embryos. His findings provoked a hostile media campaign aimed at undermining the legitimacy of his findings, and he received anonymous threats.

Activists, lawyers and health workers in areas of Argentina where agro-industry and glyphosate spraying are widespread have started to conduct their own studies, registering cases of foetal malformations and increased cancer rates in local hospitals. To date, no systematic epidemiological study of these reported phenomena has been carried out by State authorities.

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