

# URGENT ACTION

## INDIGENOUS PEOPLE EVICTED, ATTACKED

**The rural community of Paraná, in Panzos, north-eastern Guatemala, was attacked by security guards on 10 August. A local company claims it owns the land. Other local indigenous communities were evicted in March, and are at grave risk of further attacks for continuing to cultivate the land.**

Since the March eviction from the Paraná community, 22 families of indigenous farm workers – about 140 people - have been living by the roadside in the area. A community member told Amnesty that at midnight on 10 August, a group of around 30 security guards, carrying rifles, arrived at the settlement. Shouting *Denle fuego, disparen* (Set it on fire, shoot) the security guards opened fire on the community members. Three people received bullet wounds: a man was shot in the stomach; an elderly man's leg was grazed by a bullet, as was a nine-year-old girl's foot. Because of the attack, the community members hid in the nearby fields.

The police later found about 50 spent cartridges. The guards also looted the community's homes, then set crops and five homes on fire.

On 20 June, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights issued Precautionary Measures in favour of the 14 Q'eqchi' indigenous communities of Panzos. The Commission urged the state of Guatemala protect the life and physical integrity of the community members, and offer humanitarian assistance, including food and shelter, to those community members who are displaced. To date the Presidential Commission for Human Rights (COPREDEH) has not complied with the Precautionary Measures.

### **Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:**

- Urging the authorities to order an impartial and thorough investigation into injuries suffered by the three community members at Paraná, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice.
- Urging them to provide protection for all community members in the Valle del Polochic, in strict accordance with their wishes.
- Urging COPREDEH to comply the Precautionary Measures issued by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to protect the indigenous Q'eqchi' communities of Panzos, and offer humanitarian assistance, including food and shelter, to those displaced by the evictions.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 28 SEPTEMBER 2011 TO:**

Minister of the Interior  
Lic. Carlos Menocal  
Ministro de Gobernación  
6ª Avenida 13-71, Zona 1,  
Ciudad de Guatemala,  
GUATEMALA  
**Fax: +502 2413 8658**  
**Salutation: Dear Minister/  
Estimado Sr.Ministro**

President  
Ing. Álvaro Colom Caballeros  
Presidente de la República  
Casa Presidencial  
6ª Avenida 4-41, Zona 1,  
Puerta del Centro  
Ciudad de Guatemala  
GUATEMALA  
**Fax: +502 2221 4445**  
**Salutation: Dear President/Estimado  
Sr. Presidente**

NGO  
UDEFEGUA – Unidad de protección a  
defensores y defensoras de derechos  
humanos  
1 Calle 7-45 zona 1, Oficina 2-b,  
Ciudad de Guatemala  
GUATEMALA  
**E-mail: udefegua@yahoo.com**

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.**

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

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The community members were not provided with alternative accommodation and the evictions affected their right of access to food, as they depend on subsistence farming. The communities of the Valle del Polochic are still at risk of attack as they are still harvesting crops there for survival.

The government issued a press statement on 10 August condemning the attack against the indigenous community of Parará, asking for a full investigation into the attack. The statement, in Spanish, can be viewed at:  
<http://www.guatemala.gob.gt/noticia4.php?codigo=13750&titulo2=Guatemala>

Indigenous farmer Oscar Reyes was killed on 21 May, and three other farm workers were injured, while tending crops in the Valle del Polochic, in Panzos. (see UA 157/11 Index: AMR 34/005/2011)

On 15 March 2011, the police and the army forcibly evicted a farm called Miralvalle, following a failed mediation effort between the community and the authorities, regarding the possibility of harvesting some crops before leaving. According to some reports, the police and the army used teargas to carry out the eviction. A member of the community, Antonio Beb Ac, was killed during the eviction and two people were made sick by the teargas. On the same day, the authorities evicted a farm called Agua Caliente. On 16 March, the police and the army evicted a farm called Quinich and there are reports that the houses were set on fire. On 17 March, six further farms were evicted: Río Frío, Bellaflor, Ocho de Agosto, Los Recuerdos, Parará, Santa Rosita. According to human rights organisations, the Bellaflor and Ocho de Agosto communities were mistakenly evicted. On 18 March three further farms were evicted: El Sauce, Las Tinajas and Semau. (see UA: 83/11 Index: AMR 34/004/2011)

Guatemala is a party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and is therefore obliged to ensure that "evictions should not result in individuals being rendered homeless or vulnerable to the violation of other human rights". Under the same covenant, Guatemala is obliged to guarantee respect for "the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food".

The law that regulates private security services (*Ley que regula los servicios de seguridad privada*) was passed in December 2010 and came into force three months later. It states that it is the responsibility of the state to regulate security services provided by private companies, the functioning of which must be in harmony with the Peace Accords and the broader concerns of public and citizen security.

Name: Names withheld

Gender m/f: 2 males and 1 female

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