

PUBLIC

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Death threats

PERU

Julio César Vásquez Calle (m), journalist
28 members of peasant communities in Piura Region

Journalist Julio César Vásquez Calle is pursuing a complaint to the Piura region prosecutor's office against police officers and mining company security guards he claims tortured him in August 2005, while he was reporting on a protest. On 5 February he received a phone call from a man who told him he would be killed unless he dropped his complaint. Amnesty International believes that he and the 28 members of peasant communities pursuing the same complaint are in grave danger.

The threatening caller said, "Since when is your job to help terrorists? We are going to make sure that you rot in prison if you don't withdraw your complaint, if you don't drop your complaint you will go to prison in pieces." (*¿Desde cuando tu trabajo es ayudar a terroristas? Nosotros nos vamos a encargar de que te pudras en la cárcel si no te retractas, si no te retractas vas a llegar a la cárcel en pedazos*). Julio Vásquez said he had received several phone calls that week, but no one spoke when he answered.

Julio Vásquez and local human rights organizations had held a press conference on 6 January in the capital, Lima: they made public a series of photographs that had been delivered to them by hand, which had been taken during the torture he and 28 members of peasant communities in Piura had endured in August 2005.

Julio Vásquez works for a local radio station, Cutivalú, in the north-western Piura Region. On 1 August 2005, he had been reporting on a peaceful march by people from the Piura Region peasant communities of Segunda y Cajas and Yanta, in Piura, to the Majaz mining company staff encampment in the Río Blanco region, north of Piura, near the border with Ecuador. They had taken days to walk from their villages to the camp. While the protestors demonstrated outside the camp, Julio Vázques and 28 others say they were stopped by police and taken into the camp, where they said they were held for three days, and tortured, by the police and security guards working for the mining company. They said they were kept blindfolded and had sacks put over their heads which contained a powder that made them vomit and made it difficult to breathe, and beaten. The two women in the group have said they were sexually assaulted.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Minera Majaz was a subsidiary of the British company Monterrico Metals. Minera Majaz was responsible for running the copper mining project Río Blanco, until February 2007, when Monterrico Metals was bought by the Chinese Consortium Zijin. Zijin now owns 79.9 per cent of Monterrico shares. Minera Majaz has been exploring the land of the peasant communities of Segunda y Cajas and Yanta since 2003, looking for copper. According to the communities, they have not obtained the two-thirds majority vote of approval by the community assembly required by law. The communities' main objections are the pollution of their fields and water supply, the impact on the wildlife and the fact that they were not properly informed and consulted before the mining began.

Since 2006, Amnesty International has documented several cases of activists working to protect the rights of communities affected by mining projects, who have been charged with offences including terrorism, and have received death threats. None of the threats has been properly investigated and no one has been brought to justice.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Julio César Vásquez Calle, who was threatened on 5 February;
- urging the authorities to do everything possible to guarantee his safety, and that of the others pursuing a complaint that they were tortured by police and security guards working for the Majaz mining project;
- calling on them to order a prompt and impartial investigation into the death threat and bring those responsible to justice;
- calling on the authorities to order an independent and impartial investigation into the allegations against the police and security guards, and bring those responsible to justice;
- urging them to guarantee the right of local communities affected by mining projects to information and to participate in an open, transparent and fair consultation process before any mining activities take place.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior

Ministerio del Interior

Ministro del Interior

Sr. Remigio Hernaní Meloni

Plaza 30 de agosto s/n Urb. Corpac

San Isidro

Lima, PERU

Fax: + 51 1 225 7234

Salutation: Dear Minister/Sr. Ministro

Attorney General

Ministerio Público

Fiscalía de la Nación

Fiscal de la Nación

Dra. Gladys Echaíz Ramos

Av. Abancay Cuadra 5 s/n

Lima 1, PERU

Fax: + 51 1 426 2800

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Sra. Fiscal de la Nación

COPIES TO:

Human rights organization

Fundación Ecuémica para el Desarrollo y la Paz (FEDEPAZ)

Jr. Trinidad Morán 286

Lince

Lima 14, PERU

Fax: +511 421 4747

+511 421 4730

and to diplomatic representatives of Peru accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 25 March 2009.