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Minister of the Interior
Sr. Rogelio Benítez
Ministry of the Interior
Chile y Manduvira
Asunción
Paraguay

London, 30 June 2005

Dear Minister,

Amnesty International has received, with extreme concern, news of the death of two peasants, the burning down of homes and injuries to at least five people, on 24 June 2005, during an eviction in the settlement of Tekojoja, in Vaquería district, Caaguazú Department.

According to reports published by Paraguayan and international media and non-governmental organisations, police violently evicted peasant families in Vaquería, destroyed crops, burned down homes, beat and detained dozens of peasant families, including children, without a warrant and with the subsequent participation of armed civilians. According to reports, armed civilians burst into the area, shooting. As a result, Ángel Cristaldo and Leopoldo Torres, peasants members of the *Organización Agraria y Popular*, Agrarian and Popular Organization, were killed and at least five other people were wounded.

Amnesty International understands that this eviction is related to claims made by transgenic soya farmers to land settled by peasants in Vaquería. Amnesty International has received information indicating that the peasants in Vaquería were in legal possession of the land, having received it in accordance with the Agrarian Code. Although Amnesty International has no position on land tenure, it is very concerned about human rights violations perpetrated as a result of these claims. In this case, the organization considers the incidents reported during the eviction in Vaquería to be very serious.

It is reported that the peasants who had been detained have been released and that a judicial investigation is being conducted into the serious incidents of 24 June. In this respect, the organisation would appreciate being informed of developments in this investigation. It also urgently calls for the investigation to be exhaustive and independent, for its results and methods to be made public and for those found responsible to be brought to justice.

Amnesty International also urges the authorities to take all possible measures to promote respect for human rights and avoid violent acts being committed during the land conflicts in which more lives could be lost. The organisation also requests information from the authorities on such measures.

We thank the Minister for the attention given to this letter and to the concerns it expresses. We would like to inform you that we are sending a copy of this letter to the President of the Republic, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Attorney General.

Yours sincerely,
Guadalupe Marengo
Deputy Director
America Regional Program