

URGENT ACTION

ESTABLISH THE WHEREABOUTS OF MISSING MINERS

Twenty-eight informal gold miners have been reported missing in Venezuela in the town of Tumeremo, Bolivar State. The relatives of the male and female miners and other members of the community may be at risk.

The relatives of **28 informal gold miners** have reported them missing since 4 March in the town of Tumeremo, Bolivar State in southeast Venezuela. Their whereabouts are still unknown. According to the relatives' statements in the press, they believe their family members were attacked by a gang to gain control of the Atenas mine, where a large seam of gold has recently been discovered. Survivors of the attack told the press that the attackers shot the 28 informal gold miners reported missing, dismembered their bodies and forced the survivors to load the bodies onto a truck. The survivors stated they received death threats demanding they keep silent. They also reported that among the attackers were members of the Venezuelan Intelligence Service (SEBIN) and Investigative Police (CICPC).

Since 5 March, relatives of those reported missing and other members of the community blocked a road in Tumeremo to demand an investigation into what happened to their relatives. On 10 March Tumeremo was militarized and all protests were dispersed.

The State Governor's initial reaction was to deny that a massacre had happened. However, the National Assembly has created a commission to investigate the events. The Attorney General's Office has appointed two public prosecutors to lead the investigation on the case and has requested protection measures for two of the relatives. The Minister of Interior and Ombudsman travelled to Tumeremo and reported that the armed forces are leading the search operation to establish the whereabouts of the missing people. The authorities have yet to inform of any results of the ongoing investigations.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to take all effective measures available in order to establish the whereabouts of the 28 informal gold miners reported missing;
- Calling on them to ensure the protection of those who survived the reported attack and the relatives of those reported missing, according to their wishes;
- Urging the Attorney General to carry out a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the events and bring those responsible to justice.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 21 APRIL 2016 TO:

Minister of Justice and Interior

Gustavo González López
Ministerio del Poder Popular para
Relaciones Interiores, Justicia y Paz
Av. Urdaneta, Edificio Interior y Justicia
Caracas, Venezuela
Fax: +58 212 506 1558
Email: mijcudecon@gmail.com

Salutation: Señor Ministro/

Dear Minister

Attorney General of the Republic

Dra. Luisa Ortega Díaz
Edificio Sede Principal del Ministerio
Público, Esquinas de Misericordia a Pele
El Ojo Avenida México
Caracas, Venezuela
Fax: +58 212 578 3239
Email: ministeriopublico@mp.gob.ve

Salutation: Dra. Fiscal / Dear Attorney

General

And copies to:

Ombudsman

Tarek William Saab
Defensor del Pueblo
Av. Urdaneta - Frente a El Universal
Centro Financiero Latino, Piso 27
Caracas, Venezuela
Fax: +58 212 507 7025

Email: contacto@defensoria.gob.ve

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

According to official estimates, Bolivar State has the second largest gold reserves in the world. Coltan, bauxite and aluminum, among other minerals, are also abundant in the region. Most of the mining, however, is not regularized.

The government has proposed various plans to combat illegal mining over the past decade. In 2014 President Nicolás Maduro's government acknowledged that the regularization of the area was a debt of the country when it launched the Presidential Commission for the Protection, Development and Integral Promotion of Lawful Mining Activity in the Region (Comisión Presidencial para la Protección, el Desarrollo y Promoción Integral de la Actividad Mineral Lícita en la Región), and in January 2016 the Ministry of Oil and Mining announced that they would ensure the armed forces were well equipped to implement the plans to fight the irregularity. However, illegal mining, the rise of armed gangs and the alleged complicity of the armed forces in irregular mining and extortion in the area remains a serious concern.

In 2012 ten members of the armed forces were sentenced to up to five years imprisonment for the killing of six miners in the area known as La Paragua.

According to the local mayor of El Callao municipality, which is one of the 11 that make up Bolivar State, there were 90 murders in 2015, the majority of which were mining related.

Name: 28 informal gold miners

Gender m/f: both

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