

AI Index: PRE 01/227/2010
07 July 2010

Missionary defending Amazon tribes in Peru must not be deported

Amnesty International has called on the Peruvian government to revoke its decision to expel a British catholic activist who has spent the past ten years defending the rights of the country's Indigenous people.

Paul McAuley, who helps local communities protest against the effect of oil, gas and mining exploitation on their environment, is facing deportation today after the authorities said they would cancel his residency permit.

He recently publicly denounced an oil spill into the waters of Amazonian river Marañon, in June.

“The government’s attitude towards Indigenous people and those who work to protect their rights is deeply disturbing,” said Guadalupe Marengo, Deputy Americas Director at Amnesty International.

“This attempt to expel a human rights advocate who has worked tirelessly to protect Amazon communities and their environment is the latest example of the attack on Indigenous People’s rights that is taking place in Peru.”

In a letter to the Interior Minister on 5 July, Amnesty International pointed out that the missionary had been given no opportunity to appeal the rejection of his residency permit that was announced on 1 July, when he was given seven days to leave the country and never return.

Paul McAuley has worked to raise awareness amongst the local population about their rights, which are enshrined in international human rights law, while speaking out on the effects of extractive companies.

The Peruvian government has described Paul McAuley’s human rights work as ‘political’, with Prime Minister Javier Velazquez declaring that “foreigners living in Peru are restricted from participating in political activities.”

“Brother Paul”, as he is known amongst the communities he works with, has been awarded an MBE by Queen Elizabeth 2 for his work, along with The Spanish Order Medal and Prize.

“The government must immediately revoke this expulsion and end its continuing crackdown on Indigenous people as they battle for their human rights,” Guadalupe Marengo.

In June, President Alan Garcia failed to confirm a law requiring consultation with Indigenous people on matters that affect them that already had been passed by the Peruvian congress.

Indigenous leaders continue to face unsubstantiated charges and no-one has yet been brought to trial for the

violence that occurred when police broke up a protest staged by Indigenous people over land and resources at Bagua in June 2009, which left 33 people dead, including 23 police officers.

The protest stemmed from the government's failure to consult with Indigenous people over a series of decree laws that would have affected their land and resources.