

URGENT ACTION

ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDER'S HOME SET ON FIRE

Environmental defender Margoth Escobar could be at risk after her home was intentionally set on fire in Puyo, in the Ecuadorian Amazon, on 29 September. This is the fourth attack this year against members of the Amazon Women collective who defend the land, the territory and the environment in the Ecuadorian Amazon.

On 29 September, environmental defender **Margoth Escobar's** home was intentionally set on fire in Puyo, Pastaza province, in the Ecuadorian Amazon. The fire destroyed Margoth's home including the merchandise she gathered with fellow merchants to sell over the Christmas period. Margoth is a member of the Amazon Women collective, an organization of mostly Indigenous women who defend the land, the territory and the environment in the Ecuadorian Amazon. This year, three Indigenous defenders from the same collective were threatened and attacked. Ecuadorian authorities have failed to effectively protect them and to identify the perpetrators. Therefore, Margoth's personal integrity could be currently at risk.

On 1 October, Puyo's Fire Brigade Commander declared that Margoth's home fire was intentionally caused, as concluded by their expert. On 2 October, Margoth filed a criminal complaint at the Attorney General's Office of the Pastaza province but she has not been offered any protection measures.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language, to the Ecuadorian authorities:

- Urging them to implement effective and adequate protection measures to safeguard Margoth Escobar and her family's personal integrity, in consultation with her and with her consent;
- Urging them to conduct a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation into the fire of Margoth Escobar's home, considering the possible motivations of the attack in relation to Margoth's work as a human rights defender, and bringing all those found responsible to justice;
- Calling on them to publicly recognize the valuable and legitimate work of human rights defenders in Ecuador, including of those who defend the land, the territory and the environment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 NOVEMBER 2018 TO:

Minister of Interior

María Paula Romo Rodríguez

Ministerio del Interior

Benalcázar N4-24 y Espejo,
170401, Quito, Ecuador.

Twitter: @MinInteriorEc

Salutation: Minister/ Señora Ministra

Attorney General

Paúl Pérez Reina

Fiscalía General del Estado

Av. Patria y 12 de octubre, Edificio Patria,
170143, Quito, Ecuador.

Twitter: @FiscaliaEcuador

**Salutation: Attorney General/Señor
Fiscal General**

People's Defender (Ombudsman)

Gina Benavides

Defensoría del Pueblo

Av. de La Prensa N 54-97 y Jorge Piedra,
170104, Quito, Ecuador.

Email: gbenavides@dpe.gob.ec

Twitter: @DefensoriaEc

**Salutation: People's Defender/Señora
Defensora del Pueblo**

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

This year, three Indigenous defenders from the Amazon Women collective were threatened and attacked. Ecuadorian authorities have failed to effectively protect them and to identify the perpetrators.

On 5 January, Patricia Gualinga, leader of the Indigenous community Kichwa Sarayaku and member of Amazon Women collective, was attacked by unknown assailants who threw rocks at her home in the city of Puyo as they screamed threats at her. During the investigation, Patricia Gualinga was denied access to images from public security cameras located on the street where she lives and where the attack took place. These images could have allowed her to identify the attackers.

On April, Nema Grefa Ushigua, President of the Indigenous community Sápara Nation and member of Amazon Women collective, received a death threat. Government authorities have not offered her protection, even though she filed a criminal complaint for that death threat and a subsequent one.

On 13 May, the home of Salomé Aranda, a Kichwa Indigenous leader from the community of Moretecocha and member of Amazon Women, was attacked by several people throwing rocks. To date, there is no public information about any investigation into the identities of the attackers or their motives. Salomé Aranda has publicly denounced the environmental impacts of oil operations in the Villano river basin, as well as cases of sexual abuse related to these operations, as she did in a meeting with President Lenin Moreno on 22 March.

On 9 August, Amnesty International together with environmental and Indigenous rights organizations Ecological Action, Amazon Watch, the Ecumenical Commission of Human Rights and Pachamama Foundation launched the *Guardians of Nature* campaign and an open letter to President Lenin Moreno, calling authorities to effectively investigate attacks against Indigenous defenders, to implement a national policy to protect human rights defenders, to implement a protocol for the investigation of crimes against them, and to sign the *Escazú* Agreement on access to information, participation and justice on environmental issues.

Names: Margoth Escobar

Gender: Female

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