

PUBLIC

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Fear for Safety/Death threats

02 May 2003

BOLIVIA

Carlos Cuasace Surubí (m), President of *Organización Indígena Chiquitana* (OICH), Chiquitana Indigenous Organization
Juan Pinto (m), President of *Central Indígena de Comunidades de Concepción* (CICC), Indigenous Centre of Communities of Concepción

Carlos Cuasace Surubí, President of *Organización Indígena Chiquitana* (OICH), Chiquitana Indigenous Organization and Juan Pinto, President of *Central Indígena de Comunidades de Concepción* (CICC), Indigenous Centre of Communities of Concepción were threatened by an individual on 28 April. This followed a meeting at the OICH office in the town of Concepción and Amnesty International is concerned for their safety.

As the two indigenous leaders from the department of Santa Cruz left the OICH office, they were approached by an individual who threatened to kill them and blow up the office if they continued to denounce him to the authorities. The man said he worked for the manager of the *Cooperativa 'La Unidad'* landholding ('The Unity' Cooperative), against whom the State Prosecutor has begun a criminal investigation. This followed the destruction and arson of forestry in the indigenous territory of Monte Verde, in the north of Santa Cruz Department.

The *Cooperativa 'La Unidad'* landholding had been identified as an illegal settlement by the *Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria* (INRA), the National Institute for Agrarian Reform during attempts to resolve land issues in the territory of Monte Verde.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has recorded attacks against lawyers who represent the Chiquitanos indigenous community in their land claims in the territory of Monte Verde. On 18 October 1996, the President of the Republic of Bolivia officially announced INRA Law 1715, which recognized the territory of Monte Verde. The Law ordered the resolution of land issues and granting of land titles in the territory within ten months of the announcement. However, the process has still not been completed even though a number of years have passed, during which there have been clashes between private individuals who want land in the territory and the indigenous communities.

Since 2001, Amnesty International has noted with concern a worrying pattern of attacks against lawyers from the non-governmental organization (NGO) *Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social* (CEJIS), Centre for Legal Studies and Social Research. CEJIS also alleges that individuals have made death threats against community leaders and legal aid workers.

On 17 September 2002, in a telephone call to the office of the OICH, a person who identified himself as the President of the local Civic Committee indicated that CEJIS lawyer, Leonardo Tamburini, who is a legal advisor to the Chiquitana community, should leave the area within three hours. Leonardo Tamburini has subsequently been unable to carry out his work because of fear for his personal safety. The veiled threat was made at the same time as leaders of the indigenous organizations from the areas of Concepción, San Javier and Lomerío and the OICH were meeting the institutions that support them in their land claims.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Carlos Cuasace Surubí and Juan Pinto;

- urging the Bolivian authorities to take immediate and effective action to protect Carlos Cuasace Surubí and Juan Pinto;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the death threats against the two men, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging the Bolivian government to arbitrate promptly in land disputes to reduce the risk of violence.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Presidency, Justice and Human Rights

Sr. Ministro de la Presidencia e Interino de Justicia y Derechos Humanos

Sr. Guillermo Justiniano

Palacio de Gobierno

Plaza Murillo s/n

La Paz, Bolivia

Telegrams: **Minister of the Presidency, Justice and Human Rights, La Paz, Bolivia**

Fax: **+ 591 22 203588**

Salutation: **Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister**

Interior Minister

Sr. Ministro de Gobierno

Sr. Yerko Kukoc

Ministerio de Gobierno

Av. Arce No. 2409 esq. Belisario Salinas

La Paz, Bolivia

Telegrams: **Interior Minister, La Paz, Bolivia**

Fax: **+591 2 24 42589**

Salutation: **Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister**

COPIES TO:

Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social (CEJIS), Centre for Legal Studies and Social Research

CEJIS - Santa Cruz

Alfredo Jordán No. 79

Santa Cruz, Bolivia

Fax: **+ 591 3 535169**

Newspaper

El Deber

Av. El Trompillo 1144 entrada Av. San Aurelio

Santa Cruz, Bolivia

Fax: **+ 591 3 536637**

and to diplomatic representatives of BOLIVIA accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 13 June 2003.