

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 28/005/2004

20 February 2004

UA 75/04 Death Threats / Fear for safety

ECUADOR **Members of *Fundación Pachamama* (Pachamama Foundation), a human rights organization**

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of members of a local human rights organization, *Fundación Pachamama* (Pachamama Foundation), who have received a series of death threats and intimidatory messages. The threats are believed to be linked to the organization's long-standing support of an indigenous community which opposes plans by a foreign oil company to drill for oil in their territory.

On 12 February, *Fundación Pachamama* members reportedly received three anonymous threatening phone calls. The first phone call, received in the morning, gave the message: "oil means development for the country. If you oppose it you will bear the consequences" ("*el petroleo es el desarrollo del país, si ustedes se oponen, aténganse a las consecuencias*"). In the second phone call, made a couple of hours later, the anonymous caller used abusive language. In the third call, a few minutes later, an unknown voice said: "we are going to kill you" ("*te vamos a matar*").

The death threats appear to be related to *Fundación Pachamama's* work in support of the Sarayaku indigenous community in the Pastaza region. The Sarayaku community strongly opposes the activities of an Argentine oil company, *Compañía General de Combustibles* (CGC), General Fuel Company, which has been granted a concession by the Ecuadorian state to extract oil in the region.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Sarayaku community appears to have been the object of a campaign of intimidation and defamation as a result of their opposition to the concession given to oil companies to start drilling work in their territory (see UA 59/03 (AI Index AMR 28/005/2003, 28 February 2003) and press statement (AI Index AMR 28/003/2004)).

The Sarayaku community argue that oil extraction in their territory will damage their environment and way of life, which they do not want to abandon. They have proposed alternative, sustainable development in their territory so that their culture will not suffer.

In May 2003, the Inter-American Commission ordered the Ecuadorian state to protect the Sarayaku community after some of their leaders received death threats in February 2003. In December, the Inter-American Commission, part of the Organization of American States (OAS), extended the precautionary measures after members of the Sarayaku community were victims of repeated death threats and were physically and verbally assaulted during a demonstration in the same month. However, in January 2004 Ecuador's Minister of Energy and Mines reportedly responded to the Inter-American Commission's precautionary measures by stating that "the OAS does not give orders here" ("*la OEA no manda aquí*") and said that the Ecuadorian state would respect the agreement with the CGC and continue its plans to allow oil exploitation in the area.

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

- expressing concern at the death threats received by members of the staff of *Fundación Pachamama*;
- calling on the authorities to do everything necessary to ensure the safety of the staff, in accordance with the wishes of the staff themselves;

- calling for a full and independent investigation into the death threats, for the findings to be made public, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- express grave concern that the threats and harassment against *Fundación Pachamama* make it increasingly difficult for the organization to carry out its legitimate work on behalf of indigenous communities.

APPEALS TO:

Attorney General

Dra. Mariana Yépez de Velasco
Ministra Fiscal General del Estado
Fiscalía General del Estado
Av. Eloy Alfaro N° 32-240 y República
Quito, Ecuador

Fax: + 593 2 2558 565 (if someone replies say “tono de fax por favor”)

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Sra. Fiscal

Minister of the Interior and Police

Ing. Raúl Baca Carbo
Ministro de Gobierno, Policía,
Justicia, Cultos y Municipalidades
Ministerio de Gobierno y Policía
Benalcázar y Espejo
Quito, Ecuador

Fax: + 593 2 2580 067

Salutation: Dear Minister/Sr. Ministro

COPIES TO:

Minister of Energy and Mines

Cnrl (r) Carlos Arboleda Heredia
Ministro de Energía y Minas
Ministerio de Energía y Minas
Juan León Mera N26-220 y Orellana
Quito, Ecuador

Fax: + 593 2 2906 350

Salutation: Dear Minister/Sr. Ministro

Centre for Documentation of Human Rights

Centro de Documentación en Derechos Humanos
"Segundo Montes Mozo SJ@ CSMM
Coordinador: Pablo de la Vega
Nicolás Jiménez, E 4, 223, y Av. 12 de Octubre, piso 5, Of.E- 3
Quito, Ecuador
Casilla: 17-08-8069
Quito, Ecuador

Telefax: + 593 2 2543 845 (if someone replies say “tono de fax por favor”)

and to diplomatic representatives of Ecuador accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 2 April 2004.