

November 2006

UA 312/06 Fear for safety

PERU Father Marco Arana (m), priest and member of the Training and Intervention Group for Sustainable Development (*Grupo de Formación e Intervención para Sostenible*, GRUFIDES)
Mirtha Vasquez Chuquilin (f), Executive Director of GRUFIDES
Other members of GRUFIDES

el Desarrollo

Father Marco Arana and Dr Mirtha Vasquez Chuquilin have received repeated death threats and have been followed and filmed both at work and at home. The threats and harassment appear to be directly linked to their work for the Training and Intervention Group for Sustainable Development (*Grupo de Formación e Intervención para el Desarrollo Sostenible*, GRUFIDES), a human rights and environmental organization. Their lives, and those of others associated with GRUFIDES, may be in danger.

GRUFIDES members have been the target of threats and intimidation in recent months. All of these incidents have been reported to the authorities but no action has been taken to investigate them, or to offer protection to those at risk.

On 31 August, Dr Mirtha Vasquez Chuquilin, Executive Director of GRUFIDES, received an anonymous telephone call in which she was told "*Te vamos a violar y luego te vamos a matar*" (We will rape you and then we will kill you). Father Marco Arana, a member of GRUFIDES, received anonymous death threats by telephone on both 3 and 4 August. On 27 September, Father Arana's niece received a telephone call in which she was told: "*Dile a tu tío que no se meta, le vamos a disparar un balazo en la cabeza*" (Tell your uncle not to get involved, we will put a bullet through his head).

Father Marco Arana and Dr. Mirtha Vasquez Chuquilin, as well as other members of GRUFIDES, have apparently also been followed by unidentified individuals on motorbikes, and have also been filmed and photographed in the street. On 23 September, the home of a member of GRUFIDES was broken into, and documents and computer files relating to the work of the organization were searched. Nothing was taken in the raid.

GRUFIDES is a non-governmental organisation that focuses on sustainable development and environmental issues based in the city of Cajamarca, in Cajamarca Province. It is actively supporting communities opposing the Yanacocha gold mining project led by a US corporation, in Cajamarca Province. GRUFIDES has also been monitoring and evaluating the Environmental Impact Studies presented by the mining company to the Ministry of Energy and Mines.

Following an accident in 2000, in which a lorry carrying mercury spilled some of its load near the Yanacocha mine, rural communities fear the potential environmental impact of the expansion of the Yanacocha mining project. Allegedly, local residents were not informed of the spill, and symptoms of mercury poisoning were apparently experienced by some members of the community.

GRUFIDES works closely with *campesino* (peasant) communities, providing them with training and legal advice. It has recently become involved in supporting the cases of two *campesino* activists who were allegedly assassinated, one in August and one in November 2006, apparently as a result of their opposition to the expansion of the Yanacocha mining project. The threats against GRUFIDES staff and members appear to have started shortly after the first alleged assassination.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In August 2006, scores of demonstrators were injured and one was shot dead during violent clashes with police and security personnel of Yanacocha's gold mining project in Cajamarca Province. The demonstrators had blocked a road to protest against the expansion of the Yanacocha mining project.

On 2 November, Edmundo Becerra Corina, an environmentalist and an opponent of Yanacocha's gold mining project, was shot dead in Yanacanchilla, Cajamarca province. He had reportedly received several death threats because of his opposition to the expansion of the mining company's activities in the region. The attack took place days before he was due to meet with representatives from the Ministry of Energy and Mines.

GRUFIDES is investigating the assassination of Edmundo Becerra Corina, and has provided support for the families of those protestors that were injured and killed in the demonstrations in August. Amnesty International is not aware of results of investigations into any of these incidents.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of all staff of GRUFIDES, after anonymous death threats were received by Father Marco Arana and Dr Mirtha Vasquez Chuquilin, and other members of the organisation were repeatedly followed and filmed;
- urging the authorities to take steps to guarantee the safety of GRUFIDES staff, in accordance with their own wishes;
- urging the authorities to carry out an independent and impartial investigation of the intimidation of GRUFIDES staff and members, making the results public and bringing those responsible to justice;
- urging the authorities to send a clear public message that they will not tolerate intimidation and harassment of human rights defenders
- expressing concern for the death of two environmental activists as well as the violent clashes between demonstrators, security personnel from the mining company and the police;
- requesting that Amnesty International be informed of the results of any investigation into these incidents.

APPEALS TO:

Attorney General

Dra. Adelaida Flora Bolívar Arteaga
Fiscalía de la Nación
Av. Abancay, cuadra 5 s/n, Lima 1, PERU
Fax: + 51 1 426 2800
Salutation: Sra. Fiscal de la Nación

Minister of Energy and Mines

Sr. Juan Gualberto Valdivia Romero
Ministro de Energía y Minas
Ministerio de Energía y Minas, Av. Las Artes Sur 260, San Borja, Lima 41, PERÚ
Fax: + 51 1 224 4490
Salutation: Sr. Ministro

Regional Governor of Cajamarca

Señor Felipe Pita Gastelumendi
Jr. Sta. Teresa de Jornet 351 - Urb. La Alameda, Cajamarca, Peru
Fax: 51 76 36 2991
Salutation: Sr. Gobernador

COPIES TO:

Human rights organization

Asociación pro-Derechos Humanos (APRODEH), Jr. Pachacútec 980, Jesús María, Lima 11, Perú
Fax: + 51 1 431 0477

and to diplomatic representatives of Peru accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 3 January 2007.
