

URGENT ACTION

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISTS CHARGED WITH REBELLION

Environmental activists, community leaders and brothers, Víctor Hugo and Darwin Javier Ramírez Piedra, have been charged with rebellion despite a lack of evidence against them. Darwin Javier has been in preventive detention since April 2014 and Victor Hugo is at large. The criminal proceedings against them appear to be an attempt to silence their campaigning against the impact of mining activities on their community's right to water.

Darwin Javier Ramírez Piedra, president of the Junín community in the northern region of Intag, was detained on 10 April 2014. He was initially brought forward as a witness and then charged in connection with an alleged attack against a delegation of the National Mining Agency (Empresa Nacional Minera del Ecuador, ENAMI) on 6 April 2014. According to the ENAMI delegation, they were travelling in the Intag region to promote the Lurimagua mining project, when seven people blocked their car, punched their driver and threw a stone into their windshield.

Darwin Javier Ramírez Piedra was remanded in custody despite the lack of evidence against him and the testimony of several eyewitnesses, including his doctor, all of whom have stated that he was at home recovering from a knee injury at the time of the alleged attack. Amnesty International has recently learned that Darwin Javier and **Víctor Hugo Ramírez Piedra** are being charged with rebellion, a crime which carries a maximum sentence of three years in prison. On 15 September 2014, a judge ruled that there was sufficient evidence to try Darwin Javier Ramírez Piedra on these charges. Víctor Hugo Ramírez Piedra remains at large.

Darwin Javier and Víctor Hugo Ramírez Piedra are well-known and outspoken community leaders and environmental activists who have campaigned for years against the impact of mining on the environment and the right to water of peasant communities in the Intag region. The unsubstantiated charges against them seem to be an attempt to silence them and put an end to the long-standing opposition of their community to mining activities on their land.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern that the criminal proceeding against brothers Darwin Javier and Victor Hugo Ramírez Piedra appear to be an attempt to silence their campaigning against the impact of mining on the environment and the right to water of peasant communities in Intag;
- Urging the authorities to present solid evidence to substantiate the charge of rebellion against them or to drop the charges and release Darwin Javier Ramírez Piedra immediately and unconditionally.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 3 MARCH 2015 TO:

Minister of Justice, Human Rights and
Workshop
Dra. Ledy Zúñiga Rocha
Ministerio de Justicia, Derechos
Humanos y Cultos
Av. Colón entre Diego de Almagro y
Reina Victoria
Quito, Ecuador
Email: comunicacion@minjusticia.gob.ec
Salutation: Dear Minister/Sra. Ministra

Attorney General
Dr. Galo Alfredo Chiriboga Zambrano
Fiscalía General del Estado
Av. Patria y 12 de Octubre
Quito, Ecuador
Fax: +593 2 398 5800 ext. 163 030
Email: serranoam@fiscalia.gob.ec
**Salutation: Dear Public Prosecutor /
Señor Procurador General**

And copies to:
Local human rights NGO
Comisión Ecuemenica de Derechos
Humanos (CEDHU)
Carlos Ibarra 176 y 10 de Agosto
Edificio Yurac Pirca Piso 9
Quito, Ecuador
Email: cedhu@cedhu.org

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

Intag is a region in northern Ecuador rich in subtropical forests and biodiversity. In the early 1990s as the first mining project was underway, the communities of Intag organized themselves against mining activities in the area. They believe the Lurimagua mining project, led by the National Mining Agency (Empresa Nacional Minera del Ecuador, ENAMI), would harm the region's environment, including its water resources.

For several years Amnesty International has received testimonies and reports of how those who campaign against the mining project in the Intag region have been intimidated, harassed and attacked. This includes public declarations by Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa who has attacked the activities of these activists during his weekly television addresses to the nation. For more information please see UA 334/13, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR28/004/2013/en>.

In May 2014 the Junín community also denounced a vast police presence in support of ENAMI who were allegedly carrying out exploratory mining activities. The community members complained that this extensive police presence was disrupting their everyday life and placing restrictions on their right to freedom of movement. A commission of human rights observers undertook an in situ visit to the region and determined that the police presence was a de facto state of emergency as it was restricting rights such as freedom of movement, freedom of expression and freedom of association.

Among the concerns expressed by the communities affected by the Lurimagua mining project is the lack of consultation. The authorities in Ecuador have repeatedly sought to undermine communities' claims for greater participation by arguing that expanding the extractive industry is not only necessary for national development, but also beneficial. While many may argue that particular projects or legislation may be beneficial to these local communities, it is vital that any decisions that have an impact on their human rights are made in a manner that is consistent with international human rights standards. This requires that people's rights to participation and information, and right to consultation be respected.

Amnesty International is concerned that in recent years spurious criminal charges have been brought against Indigenous and peasant farmer (*campesino*) leaders, in what appears to be a deliberate attempt to curb their rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association. The organization has documented cases of leaders who have been charged with criminal offences such as terrorism, sabotage, illicit association, kidnapping, murder, causing injury, robbery, trespassing and illegal obstruction of public roads in the context of protests against laws and policies, particularly those that relate to natural resources.

Name: Darwin Javier Ramírez Piedra and Víctor Hugo Ramírez Piedra

Gender m/f: m

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