

URGENT ACTION

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' COMMUNITY AT RISK

The Yanua kim Indigenous community in the Zamora Chinchipe province, south-eastern Ecuador, fear for their safety after one of their leaders was assassinated and his house raided by the police.

The body of **José Isidro Tendetza Antún**, the leader of the Shuar people who had not been seen since 28 November, was found on 2 December floating in the Zamora River in south-eastern Ecuador. José Tendetza was initially buried without having been identified and without his family being notified. After complaints by his family and other members of the **Yanua kim community**, his body was exhumed and a second autopsy conducted. Although the official results of the autopsy are still pending, it appears he was asphyxiated. An investigation into his death is being carried out by a local prosecutor and by a commission created by the Ministry of the Interior.

The Indigenous leader, who was well-known for his activism against mining projects in the area, had been on his way to the UN Climate Change Conference in the Peruvian capital, Lima, to present his concerns about the construction of the Mirador mining project in his community. According to the Ecuadorian human rights organization INREDH, José Tendetza had been constantly targeted and harassed since 2009 due to his campaign. In 2012 his house and crops were also reportedly burned and destroyed. All this was reported to the local police station in Panguí, Zamora province, but no one was ever brought to justice.

Police raided José Tendetza's home, in the Yanua kim community, Zamora Chinchipe province, on 10 December as part of the investigation into his murder. The Yanua kim community claim they felt threatened by the attitude of the police forces, and they and other Indigenous leaders who have spoken out against extractive projects on their lands, fear they are in danger.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Urging the Ecuadorian authorities to take immediate measures to protect José Isidro Tendetza Antún's family, the Yanua kim community and its leaders, in consultation with them;
- Calling on them to ensure an independent and thorough investigation into the circumstances of the death of the Shuar leader José Isidro Tendetza Antún and bring those responsible to justice;
- Urging them to take all necessary measures to prevent other leaders who oppose extractive projects from being assassinated or injured, investigating threats made against them, giving them protection when requested and according to their wishes, guaranteeing Indigenous peoples' right to their land and to free prior and informed consent

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 28 JANUARY 2015 TO:

Attorney General

Dr. Galo Chiriboga Zambrano
Fiscal General del Estado
Av. Eloy Alfaro N32 250 y República
Quito, Ecuador
Email: chiribogag@fiscalia.gob.ec /
galoarnulfo@hotmail.es

**Salutation: Dear Attorney General /
Estimado Fiscal General**

Minister of the Interior

Sr. José Serrano Salgado
Ministro del Interior
Benalcázar N4-24 y Espejo
Quito, Ecuador
Email:
jose.serrano@ministeriodelinterior.gob.ec

**Salutation: Dear Minister / Estimado
Ministro**

And copies to:

INREDH

Email: comunicación@inredh.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

José Isidro Tendetza Antún, a leader of the Shuar people, Ecuador's second-largest Indigenous group, and former vice-president of the Shuar Federation of the Zamora province, had been a prominent activist against the Mirador mine, an open-cast pit for gold and copper that had been approved in an area where the Shuar people live.

According to media reports, the Mirador project is operated by the company Ecuacorriente, which is owned by a group of Chinese firms. A contract was signed in March 2012 for a mining project that, according to the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, will damage around 450,000 acres of forest.

José Tendetza worked for Ecuacorriente until 2006, when he witnessed a family being violently attacked and their crops and house burnt down, in an attempt to evict them from territories that the company claimed as theirs. Since then he had become a leader of the movement opposing the mining project and had complained to the police that he had been threatened by the company's workers and security guards.

The Yanua kim community claim the land where they live, and where José Tendetza lived, as part of their ancestral territory, and they began a formal request for legal title to the land in 2012. However, Ecuacorriente claim that they have rights over this part of territory since it was assigned to them for the Mirador Project.

In January 2013, together with other Shuar community representatives, José Tendetza signed a letter to the Chinese bank that was offering financial support to the Chinese firms that own Ecuacorriente. In the letter the Indigenous leaders highlighted the negative consequences of the Mirador project on the ecosystem and the possible violations of Indigenous peoples' rights, Ecuadorian law and international law. The letter, a copy of which Amnesty International has received, also highlighted the fact that the Mirador project would have a direct impact on eight indigenous communities and 170 families, who had not been consulted or given their consent to the project.

That month, José Tendetza was among a group of Indigenous leaders that presented a complaint (*tutela*) against Ecuacorriente before national courts, in order to protect the rights of nature, guaranteed in Ecuador's constitution, which was denied. A second complaint against the Ecuadorian State was presented to the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR) in March 2014.

José Tendetza's death is being investigated by a local prosecutor and by a commission created by the Ministry of Interior. In addition, the Ministry announced on 9 December that \$US100,000 would be given to anyone with accurate information on José Tendetza's murder. This killing and the threats against the Yanua kim community highlight the violence and harassment that human rights defenders who oppose extractive projects face in Ecuador and beyond.

Ecuador has ratified Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples and supported the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which requires the recognition of the rights of Indigenous peoples to their ancestral lands and natural resources and the right to consultation and free, prior and informed consent.

Name: José Isidro Tenderza Antún, members of the Yanua kim community
Gender m/f: both

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