

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 28/013/2005

01 June 2005

UA 147/05 Fear for safety

ECUADOR Staff at the non-governmental organization *Acción Ecológica*

The offices of the non-governmental organisation *Acción Ecológica* (Environmental Action) in the capital, Quito, were reportedly burgled on 22 May. The burglary appears to be a threat in response to the organisation's work on behalf of indigenous people in the Amazon opposed to the international companies drilling for oil in the region, and Amnesty International fears that the lives of the organisation's staff may be in danger.

The burglars took three computer hard disks, which contained information about the activities of indigenous communities and leaders campaigning against oil-drilling in their territory and its impact on the environment, and searched the filing cabinet, but ignored valuable equipment.

Acción Ecológica is well-known in Ecuador, and has been outspoken and critical of the Ecuadorian authorities' policy of granting drilling concessions to international oil companies, and the impact that this might have on the lives and culture of indigenous groups in the Amazon region and the environment, as well as about the alleged environmental and health impact of the fumigation of coca plantations in the Colombia-Ecuador border region.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the last few years, Amnesty International has received several reports of death threats and other intimidation of human rights defenders and non-governmental organizations who are critical of the authorities, including those who oppose the government's oil extraction policies and support indigenous peoples' proposals for alternative development projects (For more information, see UA 75/04, AMR 28/005/2004, 20 February 2004 and follow-ups; UA 156/04, AMR 28/014/2004, 26 April 2004; UA 36/04, 28/002/2004, 3 February 2004) Amnesty International has called upon the authorities to investigate these threats and bring those responsible to justice, but to date nobody has been charged.

Ecuador is a member of the Organization of American States (OAS). In June 2004, the OAS General Assembly adopted a resolution reiterating its support for the work of human rights defenders and recognizing their valuable contribution to the promotion, observance, and protection of fundamental rights and freedoms in the Americas, and to the representation and defense of individuals, minorities, and other groups whose rights are threatened or violated.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of all staff at *Acción Ecológica*, whose offices were burgled on 22 May;
- asking the authorities to order a prompt and effective investigation into the burglary;
- demanding that the findings are made public and those responsible are brought to justice;
- urging the government to adhere to its obligations regarding the protection of human rights defenders, as laid out in the UN Declaration of Rights and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups, and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and the Organisation of American States resolution on human rights defenders of June 2004.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Mauricio Gándara Gallegos
Ministro de Gobierno, Policía,
Justicia, Cultos y Municipalidades
Ministerio de Gobierno y Policía
Benalcázar y Espejo
Quito, Ecuador

Fax: + 593 2 258 1030 (If someone answers, please ask: "Tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Dear Minister/Señor Ministro

Acting Attorney General

Dra. Cecilia Armas Tobar
Ministra Fiscal Subrogante
Fiscalía General del Estado
Av. Eloy Alfaro N°32-240 y República
Quito, Ecuador

Fax: + 593 2 255 8565 (If someone answers, please ask: "Tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Dear Acting Attorney General/Sra. Ministra Fiscal Subrogante

COPIES TO:

Non Governmental Organization

Acción Ecológica
Alejandro de Valdez N 24-33 y La Gasca
Quito, Ecuador
Email: verde@accioneologica.org

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 13 July 2005.