

# URGENT ACTION

## DEATH THREATS FOR ACTIVISTS DEMANDING JUSTICE

Those seeking justice for a murdered environmental activist in Cabañas department, El Salvador, are at risk. Another anti-mining activist has also been shot, and five men and one boy have received threats and warnings in an effort to stop the campaign for justice for the murdered environmentalist, Gustavo Marcelo Rivera.

The body of **Gustavo Marcelo Rivera**, who opposed mining in the area, was found in Cabañas on 30 June, bound and showing signs of torture. According to local human rights organizations, the authorities have charged at least two men with his abduction and killing. However, as Gustavo Marcelo Rivera campaigned against what he considered "deadly [mining] projects" that could have a negative impact on the people and the environment in the department, Amnesty International is concerned that local authorities are not investigating the motives for his killing.

**Ramiro Rivera**, a male community leader who has also campaigned against gold mining in the area, was shot eight times outside his home in Cabañas on 7 August. Police have arrested the man named by Ramiro Rivera as his attacker. Ramiro Rivera is receiving treatment for his injuries.

Three broadcasters on a radio station in Cabañas, **José Alexander Beltrán Castillo**, aged 19, **Ludwin Franklin Iraheta**, aged 20, and 16-year-old **Vladimir Abarca Ayala**, have received death threats after reporting on Gustavo Marcelo Rivera's killing. The threats were sent in anonymous letters and SMS messages on 24 July. One of the SMS messages said: "You are also on the list...you saw what happened to [Marcelo] the next one is you" On 27 July, **Father Luis Quintanilla**, a Catholic priest in Cabañas, was driving home after appearing on the same radio station to call for justice for Gustavo Marcelo Rivera, when another vehicle forced him off the road. Four hooded gunmen travelling in the vehicle surrounded his car but Father Luis Quintanilla was able to escape unhurt. Community leader **Héctor Antonio García Berríos** was warned on 4 August by a man he knew that if he and Gustavo Marcelo Rivera's brother, **Miguel Rivera** continued campaigning for justice for the murder, their lives would be at risk.

### PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language, urging the Salvadoran authorities to:

- ✓ Ensure that they provide José Alexander Beltrán Castillo, Ludwin Franklin Iraheta, Vladimir Abarca Ayala, Luis Quintanilla, Ramiro Rivera, Miguel Rivera and Héctor Berríos with all necessary protection according to their wishes;
- ✓ Urgently carry out an independent investigation into recent threats and attacks against anti-mining and environmental activists, journalists, community and religious leaders in the department of Cabañas;
- ✓ Thoroughly and promptly investigate the abduction, torture and killing of Gustavo Marcelo Rivera, with the results made public and those responsible, including those who may have ordered the killing to be brought to justice.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 08 OCTOBER 2009 TO:

#### Acting Attorney General

Lic. Ástor Escalante Saravia  
Fiscal General en Funciones  
Fiscalía General de la República  
Final 4ª Calle Oriente y 19ª Avenida  
Sur, Residencial Primavera,  
Santa Tecla, La Libertad, San Salvador  
El Salvador

**Fax: +503 2523-7402/7170**

**Email: astor.escalante@fgr.gov.sv**

#### **Salutation: Dear Attorney General**

Director of the National Civil Police  
Comisionado Carlos Ascencio Girón  
*Director de la Policía Nacional Civil*  
Policía Nacional Civil  
6ta. Calle Oriente entre 8va y 10ma  
Ave. Sur, # 42 Barrio La Vega  
San Salvador, El Salvador

**Email: carlosascencio@pnc.gob.sv**

**Salutation: Dear Commissioner**

#### **And copies to:**

#### Human Rights Organization

La Fundación de Estudios para la  
Aplicación de Derecho  
25 Calle Poniente No. 1332,  
Col Layco  
San Salvador, El Salvador

**Fax: +503 2236-1833**

**Email: fespainfo@vip.telesal.net**

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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## ATTACKS CONTINUE AFTER ACTIVIST MURDERED

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Community, development and environmental organizations in the Cabañas department have been campaigning against reported electoral fraud following local elections in January and against mining exploration due to the potential environmental impact and impact on the health of the local population. Threats, attacks and intimidation against activists reportedly began at least as early as May 2008 when campaigning against mining exploration in the area began and have intensified since January this year when activists denounced electoral irregularities following the elections.

Gustavo Marcelo Rivera Moreno, was Director of the House of Culture (Casa de Cultura), linked to the Ministry of Education in the municipality of San Isidro Cabañas department and together with his brother Miguel Rivera, co-founder and director of the community organization Association of Friends of San Isidro, Cabañas (Asociación Amigos de San Isidro Cabañas, ASIC). He had a long history of activism including human rights education, denouncing electoral fraud and concern for the environment.

Radio Victoria is a community radio station, committed to social and human rights reporting. Broadcasters at Radio Victoria have reported on anti-mining campaigns and have called for those responsible for the abduction and killing of Gustavo Marcelo Rivera to be brought to justice. On 25 July, the human rights ombudsman in San Salvador called on the Attorney General and the Director of the National Civil Police to provide security and protection measures for the three threatened broadcasters, to carry out a thorough investigation into the threats and for those responsible to be brought to justice. Following the threats all three broadcasters left Cabañas in fear for their safety. Ludwin Iraheta has since returned to work on Radio Victoria and is receiving protection from police from outside the area. At the time of writing, Jose Beltrán, who has reportedly refused protection, and Vladimir Abarca, have not yet returned to work in fear for their safety.

Leaders of other community-based organizations campaigning against mining in the area have also received death threats. On 29 July, Antonio Pacheco, Director of the Social and Economic Development Association of Santa (Asociación de Desarrollo Económico y Social Santa Marta, ADES) received death threats. ADES has been campaigning against the negative consequences of gold mining in Cabañas department and calling for justice in the killing of Gustavo Marcelo Rivera.

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