

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 18/005/2003

UA 119/03

Fear for Safety/Death threats

02 May 2003

BOLIVIA

Cliver Rocha (m), lawyer from *Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social (CEJIS)*, Centre for Legal Studies and Social Research

Lawyer, Cliver Rocha was attacked in the town of Riberalta, Beni Department on 23 April. He works for a local non-governmental organization called *Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social (CEJIS)*, Centre for Legal Studies and Social Research, which provides legal advice on indigenous land claims.

According to reports, Cliver Rocha was beaten by two unidentified individuals who had followed him on motorcycle after he had left his office. As he was being beaten the attackers reportedly demanded that he leave the area. He had previously reportedly been attacked on 13 March, as he left a hearing at the land court. His attacker was a local businessman who is apparently a member of a family which has claims on the Tacana indigenous lands.

Amnesty International is seriously concerned about the continuous threats received by lawyers working on behalf of the indigenous communities in the Beni and Santa Cruz Departments. CEJIS has made public complaints regarding this and other attacks suffered by its lawyers, but Amnesty International is not aware of the existence of any investigations into these attacks.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since 2001, Amnesty International has noted with concern a worrying pattern of attacks against CEJIS lawyers. CEJIS also alleges that individuals have made death threats against community leaders and legal aid workers. The threat against Cliver Rocha adds to the serious concern for the safety of Leonardo Tamburini, another CEJIS lawyer, who has been unable to carry out his legitimate work due to intimidation since September 2002. (See UA 118/03, AMR 18/004/2003, 2 May 2003).

Amnesty International has also recorded attacks against members of indigenous groups who are pressing for recognition of their land claims. On 18 October 1996, the President of the Republic of Bolivia officially announced INRA Law 1715, which recognized the territory of Monte Verde. The Law ordered the resolution of land issues and granting of land titles in the territory within ten months of the announcement. However, the process has still not been completed even though a number of years have passed, during which there have been clashes between private individuals who want land in the territory and the indigenous communities.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Cliver Rocha;
- urging the Bolivian authorities to take immediate and effective action to protect Cliver Rocha and that he be allowed to perform his legitimate work as a lawyer without threats and harassment;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the death threats received, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging the Bolivian government to arbitrate promptly in land disputes to reduce the risk of violence.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Presidency, Justice and Human Rights

Sr. Ministro de la Presidencia e Interino de Justicia y Derechos Humanos

Sr. Guillermo Justiniano

Palacio de Gobierno
Plaza Murillo s/n
La Paz, Bolivia

Telegrams: Minister of the Presidency, Justice and Human Rights, La Paz, Bolivia
Fax: + 591 22 203588
Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

Interior Minister

Sr. Ministro de Gobierno
Sr. Yerko Kukoc
Ministerio de Gobierno
Av. Arce No. 2409 esq. Belisario Salinas
La Paz, Bolivia

Telegrams: Interior Minister, La Paz, Bolivia
Fax: +591 2 24 42589
Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social (CEJIS), Centre for Legal Studies and Social Research

CEJIS - Santa Cruz
Alfredo Jordán No. 79
Santa Cruz, Bolivia

Fax: + 591 3 535169

Newspaper

El Deber
Av. El Trompillo 1144 entrada Av. San Aurelio
Santa Cruz, Bolivia

Fax: + 591 3 536637

and to diplomatic representatives of BOLIVIA accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 13 June 2003