

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 18/001/2005

13 January 2005

UA 09/05 Fear for safety/death threats

BOLIVIA **Cliver Rocha (m), lawyer**
Other members of the *Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social* (CEJIS),
Centre for Legal Studies and Social Research
Members of the Tacana indigenous community in Miraflores

An association of cattle ranchers and foresters has attacked the offices of a non-governmental organisation that represents indigenous and peasant farmers seeking their land rights, and threatened to burn lawyer Cliver Rochas alive. Amnesty International believes his life is in grave danger.

Cliver Rochas works for the *Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social* (CEJIS), Centre for Legal Studies and Social Research, which offers legal aid to indigenous and peasant communities on land issues in the north of the country. He heads the CEJIS office in the town of Riberalta, Beni department. On 5 January about 30 armed men, led by leaders of the *Asociación Agroforestal de Riberalta* (ASAGRI), Association of Ranchers and Foresters of Riberalta, stormed into the CEJIS offices, destroying and looting the office equipment and burning documents related to land ownership in the street. The group gave CEJIS 48 hours to abandon the area, and threatened to burn Cliver Rocha alive if he returns to Riberalta.

On 8 January ASAGRI circulated a "Public Statement" (*Manifiesto Público*), justifying the attack on CEJIS and accusing the organisation of "creating confrontations between us and our peasant and indigenous brothers" (*enfrentarlos con los hermanos campesinos e indígenas*). Reportedly, ASAGRI has also threatened another three NGOs working on development and land issues, telling them to leave the region before the end of January 2005, "or we will be compelled to take action" (*nos veremos obligados a tomar acciones de hecho*).

ASAGRI has also warned the indigenous Tacana people in the Miraflores area of Beni to leave the communal land that was officially granted to them in 2002, saying that otherwise they will be evicted by force. CEJIS has represented the Tacana in several disputes over land rights

The local authorities reportedly refused to give protection to CEJIS in Riberalta after the attack, suggesting instead that they close the offices until 13 January, when a national commission is expected to arrive to solve the land problems affecting the indigenous community of Miraflores.

Cliver Rocha has represented Tacana interests for some years. In April 2003, was attacked and threatened by a local businessman who was claiming Tacana land. (See UA 1129/03, AMR 18/005/2003, 2 May 2003 for details.)

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

- expressing concern for the safety of members of CEJIS in Riberalta, who were attacked on 5 January by an armed group led by members of the *Asociación Agroforestal de Riberalta*;
- expressing concern for the safety of lawyer Cliver Rocha, whom the group threatened to kill;
- urging the authorities to take immediate and effective action to protect Cliver Rocha and members of CEJIS so that they can perform their legitimate work without fear of attack or harassment;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the attack on the CEJIS office in Riberalta and the threat to burn Cliver Rocha alive, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to arbitrate promptly in land disputes to reduce the risk of violence.

APPEALS TO:President

Excmo Sr. Presidente de la Republica de Bolivia
Sr. Carlos Mesa Gisbert
Palacio de Gobierno, Plaza Murillo, La Paz, Bolivia

Fax: +5912 220 3303

Email: webmaster@presidencia.gov.bo

Salutation: Sr. Presidente /Dear President Mesa

Minister of the Presidency, Justice and Human Rights

Sr. Ministro de la Presidencia e Interino de Justicia y Derechos Humanos
Sr. José Antonio Galindo
Palacio de Gobierno, Plaza Murillo, La Paz, Bolivia

Fax: + 5912 215 3870

e-mail: correo@presidencia.gov.bo

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

Beni Authority

Sr. Prefecto del Departamento del Beni
Dr. Fernando Ávila Chávez
Plaza Ballivián acera Sur s/n, Trinidad, Beni, Bolivia

Fax: +5913 465 2157

Salutation: Sr. Prefecto / Dear Prefect

Email: despachopref@coteautri.net.bo

COPIES TO:NGO

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National Ombudsman

Sr. Defensor del Pueblo
Dr. Waldo Albarracin
Calle Colombia 440, La Paz, Bolivia

Fax: +5912 211 3538

Email: delpueblo@defensor-bo.net

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Av. El Trompillo 1144 entrada Av. San Aurelio
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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 24 February 2005.