

23 March 2016

Peru: Intimidation and death threats against environmental rights defender and journalist Cesar Estrada Chuquilin

In the early hours of 23 March 2016, environmental rights defender and journalist Mr **Cesar Estrada Chuquilin** became aware of the presence of two unidentified armed men outside his house and overheard them identifying his home, stating: “that's where he lives” (“*aqui vive*”). This follows a series of threatening messages received by the human rights defender on 22 March 2016 and the hacking of his facebook account on 15 March 2016.

[Cesar Estrada Chuquilin](#) is an environmental rights defender and journalist, member of the **Red de Comunicadores Indigenas del Perú – REDCIP** (Network of Indigenous Communicators in Peru). He has reported on several human rights violations concerning land disputes in the region of Cajamarca, including the case of the [Chaupe family](#), as well as environmental issues related to the Conga Mining Project and the use of violence and criminalization against those opposing its construction. Conga is an open-pit gold and copper mining project, led by the Yanacocha mining company, which combines the interests of the US-based Newmont mining corporation, the Peruvian mining company Buenaventura, and the World Bank.

Upon noticing the men outside his home, the human rights defender attempted to call the local police and alert them, however, there was no response on the phone. The two unidentified men later left without harming the human rights defender.

Previously, between 4:11 pm and 4:50 pm on the afternoon of 22 March 2016, the human rights defender received several death threats and intimidating messages to his mobile phone. The extremely aggressive messages included direct reference to his human rights work, “stupid you are going to die, if you think you are free, you are wrong, every time you open your mouth against Conga, is one less day for you” (“*perro vas a morir, si crees que ya estas libre, te equivocas, cada vez que habres la boca en contra de conga, es un dia menos para ti*”), as well as to his current location, which we are not disclosing for security reasons. Support received by the human rights defender from the international community was also mentioned, with one of the messages reading: “your human rights, the UN, your Irish gringos, they are not going to save you” (“*tus derechos humanos, tu ONU, tus gringos irlandeses, no te van a salvar*”). After receiving the text messages, Cesar Estrada went to the *II Comisaria de Cajamarca* (II Police Station of Cajamarca) to file a complaint, however the officer refused to accept it, alleging the facts did not constitute a crime, and advised the human rights defender to change his phone number.

One week previous, on 15 March 2016, Cesar Estrada's facebook account was hacked and used to attack his honour.

Cesar Estrada has faced severe persecution and intimidation in the past as a result of his peaceful and legitimate human rights work. He has been a victim of defamation, harassment, threats, physical attacks

and theft, and in [September](#) and [October](#) 2015 suffered assassination attempts, followed by many violent and graphic threats directed at some of his relatives. The human rights defender has also been subjected to continuous judicial harassment, including the bringing of fabricated charges of theft and the alleged kidnapping of a Yanacocha businesswoman against him. These charges remain pending. He has been a beneficiary of precautionary measures from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights since 2014.

Front Line Defenders has received recent reports from human rights defenders in Cajamarca highlighting the development of a trend of killings and attempted killings of human rights defenders in the region, including the assassination of Mr **Hitler Ananias Gonzales** on [28 December 2015](#). Within these reports, particular concern has been raised about the intensification of risks faced by human rights defenders working on issues of land and environmental rights.

Front Line Defenders is gravely concerned at the death threats against Cesar Estrada Chuquilin, which it believes to be directly motivated by his peaceful and legitimate work in the defence of environmental rights in Peru.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Peru to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into all denounced death threats and acts of intimidations against Cesar Estrada Chuquilin and members of his family, clearly considering the work of Cesar Estrada Chuquilin as a motive for the attacks, and with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards.
2. Take all necessary measures, in consultation with the defender or his representatives, to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Cesar Estrada Chuquilin and his family members;
3. Implement the necessary comprehensive measures to prevent the recurrence of these abuses;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Peru are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

Front Line Defenders respectfully reminds you that the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, recognises the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, their right to freedom of association and to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals. We would particularly draw your attention to Article 6 (b): *“Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others: (b) As provided for in human rights and other applicable international instruments, freely to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms,”* and to Article 12 (2): *“The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration.”*

Yours sincerely,



Mary Lawlor

Executive Director