

January 12th, 2015

District Attorney
Galo Arnulfo Rodriguez Abarca
Yantzaza, Ecuador

Minister of the Interior
José Serrano Salgado
Quito, Ecuador

Dear District Attorney Rodriguez and Minister Serrano,

We, the undersigned organizations, call for a just, transparent, and expeditious investigation into the tragic murder of Shuar leader and land defender José Tendetza that leads to the prosecution of both the material and intellectual authors of the crime. We also condemn the police raid on José Tendetza's house and urge the investigators to refrain from intimidation tactics.

On December 2nd, a group of mine workers found the body of José Isidro Tendetza Antún, a Shuar Indigenous leader, tied up with a blue rope and floating in the Zamora River in southeastern Ecuador. The Indigenous leader was well-known for his opposition to the Chinese mining company Ecuacorriente's mining projects. Ecuacorriente is the Ecuadorian subsidiary of CRCC Tongguan. José had been due to arrive that very same day at the UN Climate Change Conference in Lima, Perú to raise concerns about the company's construction of the Mirador mining project in his community, Yanua Kim.

Tendetza worked for Ecuacorriente until 2006 when he witnessed the company attack a family and burn down their house. Since then, he has campaigned against the company's plans to build an open-pit copper and gold mine that, if completed, would deforest 450,000 hectares of cloud forest and displace local communities, violating the Ecuadorian constitution, Chinese regulations and international law. As a result of his activism, Tendetza became a target: in 2012, his house and his crops were reportedly burned and destroyed. He also reportedly received death threats prior to his murder. According to Amnesty International, the attacks against José were reported to the local police station, but no one was ever prosecuted. The Mirador mine has led to increasing violence in the region and Tendetza is the third Shuar mining opponent who has been killed since 2009.

Tendetza went missing on November 28th, the day that he was supposed to attend a meeting with other Shuar leaders about the threat of mining in the region. But he never made it. He was initially buried in an unmarked grave without his family having been notified. After his family and other members of the Shuar nationality complained, his body was exhumed. Despite signs of torture, Minister of the Interior José Serrano declared that Tendetza was strangled. A commission created by Minister Serrano is carrying out an investigation into his death.

While we welcome the news that the Shuar Federation of Zamora is involved in the investigation, we denounce the use of intimidation by police and District Attorney Rodriguez. On December 10th, police armed with automatic weapons arrived by helicopter and raided Tendetza's home. District Attorney Rodriguez ordered the raid with the purported aim of finding evidence and "arms" that would explain José's death. Now members of Jose's community, Yanua Kim, fear for their safety. We decry this blatant show of force and urge the investigators to refrain from intimidating community members. We urge the investigators to lead a just and transparent investigation that would ensure justice for José Tendetza and safety for his family and his community. We also urge the commission to address the role that mining has played in augmenting violence in the region.

Sincerely,



AMAZON WATCH



global witness

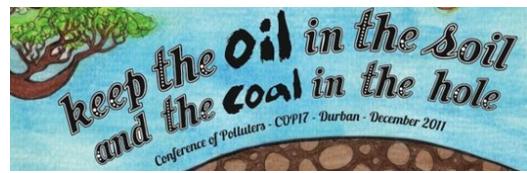


Pachamama
Alliance



MiningWatch Canada
Mines Alerté





Leave it in the Ground Initiative (LINGO)