

URGENT ACTION

FEARS FOR PROTESTORS AFTER TWO KILLED

Two protestors were killed and reportedly over 40 people injured when police dispersed a protest by Indigenous Peoples in Panama on 5 February. Protests are likely to continue across the country and there are fears that excessive force may be used by State security forces.

On 30 January members of the Ngäbe-Buglé people took to the streets to protest against an amendment to a bill which they believe will leave their lands vulnerable to the construction of hydroelectric projects, in the provinces of Chiriquí, Veraguas, and Bocas del Toro in the north of the country. Since then protests have grown and parts of the Pan-American Highway have been blocked by thousands of demonstrators. On 5 February one demonstrator, **Jerónimo Rodríguez Tugri**, was shot dead in San Felix, Chiriquí province, and there are reports that another protestor is in a critical condition. Over 40 others have reportedly been wounded, including police officers. On 7 February the media reported the death of another demonstrator, **Mauricio Méndez**, in David, Chiriquí province. The circumstances of his death have yet to be confirmed.

There are numerous allegations of excessive force on the part of the police by human rights, environmental and church groups, including the use of firearms to disperse the protestors which resulted in the death of Jerónimo Rodríguez Tugri.

Media and civil society organizations have also reported the use tear gas in close proximity to medical centres, the denial of access to legal representation of those arrested, and lack of access to medical attention for the injured. After initially denying reports that it had cut off access to the mobile phone network in areas where the demonstrations were occurring, the government has now confirmed it had cut access. As of 7 February, the phone network has been restored.

Demonstrations are likely to continue over the coming days and there are fears that more people could be wounded or killed.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- ✓ Reminding the authorities that the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials states that they “may use force only when strictly necessary and to the extent required for the performance of their duty”;
- ✓ Calling for an independent, thorough and impartial investigation into allegations of excessive use of force by the security forces;
- ✓ Calling for an independent, thorough and impartial investigation into the deaths of Jerónimo Rodríguez Tugri and Mauricio Méndez, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 20 MARCH 2012 TO:

President

Ricardo Martinelli Berrocal
Presidencia de la República, Panamá 1,
Panama
Fax: +507 527 9034

Email: prensa@presidencia.gob.pa

Salutation: Estimado Sr. Presidente/ Dear President

Ministry of Public Security

José Raúl de Mulino
Ministro de Seguridad Pública
Cl. 3 y Av. 7, Central San Felipe
Ciudad de Panamá, Panamá

Fax: +507 512 6001

Salutation: Estimado Sr. Ministro/ Dear Minister
And copies to:

Centro de Incidencia Ambiental (CIAM) (NGO)

Email: info@ciampanama.org

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

URGENT ACTION

FEARS FOR PROTESTORS AFTER TWO KILLED

ADditional Information

Last year, in February 2011, the Ngäbe-Buglé staged protests against a mining law on the basis that it facilitated new mining projects in Indigenous Peoples' territories, and did not include sufficient safeguards for the environment or consultation with local communities. The law was passed in February but repealed in March after the government and the Ngäbe-Buglé negotiated a solution to the crisis and reached an agreement, which according to Indigenous Peoples' groups, includes a provision that would see their territories protected from mining and hydroelectric development projects.

On 27 January 2012, the National Assembly debated a bill to protect the territories of the Ngäbe-Buglé Indigenous Peoples from mining and hydroelectric projects. During the debate, legislators eliminated Article 5 from the Bill, leading to mass protests across the country. Indigenous and environmental groups claim that Article 5 would have protected Indigenous lands from the imposition of hydroelectric projects, which in the past have led to the threat of Indigenous villages being flooded. Indigenous Peoples took to the streets on 30 January to protest against the amendment to the Bill.

Name: Jerónimo Rodríguez Tugri, Mauricio Méndez, and Ngäbe-Buglé protestors

Gender m/f: Jerónimo Rodríguez Tugri (male), Mauricio Méndez (male), protestors (both)

UA: 39/12 Index: AMR 44/001/2012 Issue Date: 7 February 2012