

18 December 2017

Peru: Attack on land rights defenders in Santa Clara de Uchunya

On 11 December 2017, a group of land rights defenders from Santa Clara de Uchunya community, **Federación de Comunidades Nativas del Ucayali y Afluentes – FECONAU** (Federation for Ucayali and Afluentes Native Communities) and **Instituto de Defensa Legal – IDL** (Institute for Legal Defence) were shot by unknown individuals, when they were exploring a deforested area half an hour away from the Aguaytía river.

[FECONAU](#) is one of the oldest indigenous federations of the Peruvian Amazon, which represents indigenous organisations of more than 30 native communities belonging to the Shipibo-Konibo, Asháninka, Isconahua and Aguajum indigenous peoples, in the provinces of Coronel Portillo and Padre Abad in the Ucayali region of the Peruvian Amazon. The federation advocates for land and indigenous communities' rights, while IDL is an organisation dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights and democracy in Peru.

On 11 December 2017, a group composed by 11 members of the Santa Clara de Uchunya community including Carlos Hoyos Soria, James Lozano Sangama, Miguel Fasabi Sinuiri, Iván Flores Rodríguez and also Arturo Mori, Edinson Mahua (members of FECONAU) and Álvaro Másquez Salvador (member of IDL) went together to one of the deforested sectors within the ancestral territories of the native community of Santa Clara de Uchunya, half an hour away from Aguaytía river. Some reports had pointed out the presence of land invaders in that area. The group of land rights defenders and community members reached a plantain plantation, property of Fasabi Sinuiri, that has been taken by invaders to obtain a proof of possession by the Regional Directorate of Agriculture of the Regional Government of Ucayali and claim ownership of the land.

Walking through the harvest, the group saw a house and decided to approach. Edinson Mahua, Arturo Mori, Carlos Hoyos Soria, James Lozano Sangama and Iván Flores Rodríguez were in front of the group when they heard a shot and saw a man carrying a shotgun. Members of the community identified the shooter as part of the security team of the palm oil company Ocho Sur P. S.A.C. located 5 kilometres away of the plantation. Seconds after the first shot, two more shots from the house were directed at Edinson Mahua, who was taking pictures with his phone. One of the bullets brushed his chest, causing a slight injury. After this, Iván Flores Rodríguez and Arturo Mori went to the house to inform the invaders that the lands were property of the native community. However, the occupiers responded they would be obtaining proof of possession from the Regional Directorate of Agriculture of the Regional Government of Ucayali for 620 hectares of land.

The ancestral territory of the Shipibo people in the Peruvian Amazon, especially that of the Santa Clara de Uchunya community, faces complete deforestation due the expansion of palm oil plantations. Invaders typically obtain proof of possession from Regional Directorate of Agriculture of the Regional Government of Ucayali then sell the land to the palm oil company Ocho Sur P. S.A.C. The livelihood and safety of the Santa Clara de Uchunya community is increasingly threatened, in particular for Fasabi Sinuiri, Rodit Guerra Tenazoa and Huber Flores Rodríguez who live near to the company's settlement.

Since August 2015, more than 5000 hectares of land have been appropriated and deforested by the palm oil companies. Indigenous leaders and community members who protest face death threats and intimidation. Despite suspension orders by the Ministry of Agriculture, the activities of the palm oil companies have not stopped. Peruvian human rights defenders and local communities have denounced the lack of consultation of indigenous communities and irregularities in the appropriation of communal land, as well as negative consequences on the environment and livelihood of local communities. Intense social protest in the areas affected have been met with a violent response by the state and the excessive use of force by the police and the army. Environmental rights defenders who work in the defence of the rights of indigenous or campesino communities have been the direct target of judicial harassment, physical attacks, police brutality, smear campaigns, and surveillance.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the risks human rights defenders and land defenders face everyday in order to carry out their work.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Peru to:

1. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of land, environmental and human rights defenders from Santa Clara de Uchunya community, FECONAU and IDL;
2. Provide the necessary medical treatment for Edinson Mahua;
3. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the attack against Edison Mahua and members of Santa Clara de Uchunya community, FECONAU and IDL with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
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.

