

3 April 2018

## **Bolivia: Nelson La Madrid continues to receive death threats ahead of trial surrounding Rositas Hydroelectric Project**

Human rights defender and lawyer **Nelson La Madrid** has been receiving threatening calls and messages since he filed a lawsuit against Bolivia's National Electricity Company (Empresa Nacional de Electricidad de Bolivia) on 28 March 2018. The lawsuit is aimed at preventing the construction of the Rositas Hydroelectric Project on the basis that it has not received free, prior and informed consent by the affected indigenous communities.

[Nelson La Madrid](#) is a lawyer and human rights defender in Cochabamba, Bolivia, who is legally representing the Guaraní indigenous communities of Tatarenda Nuevo and Yumao in the trial, which is expected to begin on 4 April 2018. The human rights defender is assisting these indigenous communities, which reside in Santa Cruz Province, to challenge the construction of the Rositas Hydroelectric Project (Proyecto Hidroeléctrico Rositas) before the courts.

The Rositas Hydroelectric Project threatens to flood approximately 45,000 hectares of land, which is home to twelve Guaraní communities (approximately 500 families). Bolivia's National Electricity Company is attempting to go ahead with the project without seeking the free, prior and informed consent of the affected Guaraní communities, as required by international law and article 30 of the Bolivian Constitution.

On 28 March 2018, Nelson La Madrid received an anonymous phone call in which a distorted voice warned him that he will regret pursuing the lawsuit. On 31 March 2018, he received a message saying "if you insist, your Holy Week will be very holy". On 2 April, he received another anonymous call warning him that he will not make it to the trial.

Nelson La Madrid had received death threats related to his work with the Guaraní communities prior to filing the lawsuit. In November 2017, while preparing the lawsuit, the human rights defender received a message as he returned from a visit to the Tatarenda Nuevo community. It said: "happy bus trip, darling, you may not reach Cochabamba".

On 29 March 2018, a civil court acknowledged the lawsuit and ordered that the National Electricity Company suspend all administrative and legal activity related to the construction of the Rositas Hydroelectric Project, until there is a ruling.

The court hearing is scheduled to begin on 4 April, and human rights lawyer Nelson La Madrid and the complainants from the Tatarenda Nuevo and Yumao communities fear threats and reprisals will escalate once the court case begins.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the safety of human rights defender Nelson La Madrid. Front Line Defenders expresses further concern about the increasing persecution and intimidation of indigenous and environmental rights defenders in Bolivia and the risks they face everyday to protect the land and livelihood of indigenous communities from the adverse human rights impact of extractive projects.

**Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Bolivia to:**

1. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of Nelson La Madrid, in coordination with the human rights defender;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the death threats against Nelson La Madrid with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Bolivia are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.