

Network of Concerned Historians				NCH
Campaigns				
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Names
2005		41	Peru	Luis Alberto Rueda Curimania, archeologist, a.o.
	2006			<i>follow-up 1</i>

Announcement

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) reports again about death threats against members of a Peruvian forensic team (see NCH #41). These teams excavate mass graves with evidence of past atrocities and are therefore of great concern to historians. Forensic teams throughout Latin America, particularly in Guatemala, have reported death threats against them presumably from individuals associated with the violence. Increased international attention to the forensic teams has been effective in pressuring governments to ensure the safety of these scientists.

Please note that the AAAS website assists you in composing a letter to the Minister of Justice. Go to:

http://shr.aaas.org/aaashran/alert.php?a_id=321

We hope that you can send the recommended urgent appeals immediately. Please remember to write in your professional capacity. Thank you.

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE (AAAS) HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION NETWORK

FORENSIC SCIENTISTS FACE THREATS IN PERU

14 June 2006

Case number: pe0514_for

Issues: Harassment or intimidation

Previous Alerts:

18 October 2005

FACTS OF THE CASE:

In April 2006, there was a marked increase in hostile acts committed against a team of forensic anthropologists and experts working on clandestine mass graves in Peru. During that time, their computers have been stolen along with their expert reports and the results of their work. There was an attempted break-in of the home of one member of the Peruvian Forensic Anthropologist Team. In November 2005, five experts working on the recovery of 60 bodies related to the case “Los Molinos” received intimidating threats on their cell phones the day before carrying out their work. Threats were also made to experts working on an exhumation in Ayacucho between May and August last year.

There is great concern for the team’s physical safety as well as for their emotional health and morale as they continue their difficult work in an environment of intimidation and hostility.

Peru experienced two decades of extreme political violence during the 1980s and 1990s as the government waged a brutal counterinsurgency campaign against state terrorist groups. Reports indicate that more than 69,000 people were killed or disappeared. Both the government and the rebel groups Shining Path and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement were responsible for the deaths and violence.

In 2001, the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission began its work in clarifying what occurred during the period of violence and to identify the responsible parties. The commission made recommendations to conduct exhumations of bodies from mass graves. Many of the exhumations are occurring in Ayacucho, the region that witnessed the worst of the violence and where many of those responsible and connected to those responsible for human rights violations continue to live. This creates a difficult environment in which to conduct exhumations and other human rights work.

Forensic teams throughout Latin America, particularly in Guatemala, have reported death threats against them presumably from individuals associated with the violence. Increased international attention to the forensic teams has been effective in pressuring governments to ensure the safety of these scientists.

(Sources of information for this case include: Personal correspondence with members of the Peruvian forensic team, Human Rights Watch, and the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission [<http://www.cverdad.org.pe>].)

RELEVANT HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS

American Convention on Human Rights:

Article 16: Everyone has the right to freedom of association.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights:

Article 19(1): Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.

Article 22: Everyone shall have the right to freedom of association with others.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights:

Article 15(3): The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to respect the freedom indispensable for scientific research and creative activity.

Article 6: The State Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right to work, which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work which he freely chooses or accepts, and will take appropriate steps to safeguard this right.

The Human Rights Defenders Declaration:

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 [Universal Declaration of Human Rights].

Article 6(a): Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others: To know, seek, obtain, receive and hold information about all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including having access to information as to how those rights and freedoms are given effect in domestic legislative, judicial or administrative systems.

Article 6(b): Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others: 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;

Article 6(c): Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others: To study, discuss, form and hold opinions on the observance, both in law and in practice, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and, through these and other appropriate means, to draw public attention to those matters.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Article 19: Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20(1): Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Please send faxes, letters, or emails:

Requesting that the government assure the safety and wellbeing of the Peruvian forensic anthropologists and provide any protection deemed necessary by the team; and

Asking officials to investigate threats against the individuals and to hold those responsible accountable.

APPEAL AND INQUIRY MESSAGES SHOULD BE SENT TO:

Dr. Alejandro Tudela Chopitea

Minister of Justice

Ministry of Justice

Scipión Llona 350

Miraflores

Lima 18 PERÚ

Fax: (011) 51 1 422 3577

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

His Excellency Eduardo Ferrero Costa

Ambassador of Peru

1700 Massachusetts Ave, NW

Washington, DC 20036

Fax: 202-659-8124

Salutation: Dear Mr. Ambassador

Please send copies of your appeals, and any responses you may receive, or direct any questions you may have to Victoria Baxter, AAAS Science and Human Rights Program, 1200 New York Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20005; tel. 202-326-6797; email vbaxter@aaas.org; or fax 202-289-4950.

The keys to effective appeals are to be courteous and respectful, accurate and precise, impartial in approach, and as specific as possible regarding the alleged violation and the international human rights standards and instruments that apply to the situation. Reference to your scientific organization and professional affiliation is always helpful.

To ensure that appeals are current and credible, please do not continue to write appeals on this case after 90 days from the date of the posting unless an update has been issued.