

Statement by EARTHWORKS on recent incidents involving community leaders in Peru and Ghana

EARTHWORKS is deeply concerned for the safety of Father Marco Arana, Dr. Mirtha Vasquez Chuquilin, and other members of the Peruvian organization GRUFIDES who have, in recent months, been targeted with death threats, defamation, and surveillance at home and at work. GRUFIDES (El Grupo de Formación e Intervención para el Desarrollo Sostenible) is a human rights and environmental organization that works with communities impacted by mining in the Cajamarca region of northern Peru, where Newmont Mining's Yanacocha gold mine is located. Since August 2006, there have been two deaths in the area, one of a farmer who was shot during violent clashes between locals protesting Yanacocha's expansion plans and police and security personnel, and the other of a local environmentalist and critic of the mine. GRUFIDES is providing support to the victims' families and urging investigation into both shootings to determine who is responsible. The threats against GRUFIDES staff reportedly started shortly after the August shooting.

EARTHWORKS also expresses concern over an incident on November 27th in which false allegations made against representatives of two NGOs, WACAM and Oxfam America, led to their arrest by local police in the community of Yamfo in the Brong-Ahafo region of Ghana, near Newmont Mining's Ahafo gold mine. These individuals were in Yamfo to meet with the local community regarding community concerns about the mining project. WACAM (the Wassa Association of Communities Affected by Mining) is a Ghanaian community-based organization that provides support to mining-affected communities.

EARTHWORKS urges the authorities in each country to fully investigate and report upon these incidents, and to ensure the safety of environmental and community rights activists. EARTHWORKS also calls on Newmont Mining Corp. to publicly condemn the intimidation of community activists and to ensure that none of its employees are engaged in activities that violate human rights or contribute to violence and repression.

EARTHWORKS has been working with GRUFIDES, WACAM, and Oxfam America for many years to help protect communities and the environment from the negative impacts of mining.

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