PERU’S DEADLY ENVIRONMENT

THE RISE IN KILLINGS OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND LAND DEFENDERS
Below: Four indigenous leaders, including Edwin Chota, were recently killed by suspected illegal loggers. This community of Alto Tamaya-Saweto continues to struggle for recognition of its land rights in the Peruvian amazon. © Emory Richey.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The world’s attention will be on Peru this December, as governments from 195 countries convene in the capital Lima for the 2014 UN Climate Conference. As delegates negotiate a global deal aimed at averting catastrophic climate change, a parallel human rights crisis is unfolding in Peru and around the world. An increasing number of people on the frontline of the fight to protect the environment are being killed.

The recent murders of Peruvian indigenous leader Edwin Chota and three of his colleagues, who died trying to defend their land in the Amazon from illegal logging, are part of a global trend in violent crime against activists. Global Witness research, published earlier this year, shows that on average, two such ‘environmental and land’ defenders are being killed each week around the world, a rate that has been increasing in recent years. Governments aren’t doing enough to stop it.

As global demand for natural resources intensifies, more and more ordinary people are having to defend their rights to land and the environment from corporate or state abuse. Many of the killings stem from conflicts over the ownership and use of land, particularly in the face of expanded mining and logging activities. An estimated 93% of extractive and agriculture projects happen on land that is already inhabited. Our research found that Peru is the world’s fourth deadliest country to be an environmental or land defender, behind Brazil, Honduras and the Philippines. Between 2002 and 2014, at least 57 such activists were killed in Peru. More than half died during the last four years.

In few countries is the critical role of leaders like Edwin Chota in the fight to prevent environmental destruction more apparent than in Peru. The country is home to an area of rainforest roughly the size of Germany and Norway combined. The destruction of tropical forests around the world is one of the largest sources of emissions contributing to climate change, and deforestation rates in Peru doubled in 2012 from the previous year, accounting for nearly half its annual greenhouse gas emissions.

Peru’s forests are home to more than 300,000 indigenous peoples, such as Chota’s Ashéninka group, who claim rights to their
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Continued

traditional lands. The realisation of indigenous land rights has proven to be one of the most effective ways to curb deforestation," but communities are not receiving the support and protections they need. There are currently over 20 million hectares (ha) of indigenous land claims in the Peruvian Amazon that the Government has failed to process.50 Although Peru has made commitments to protect its rainforest, stating its intention to reduce net deforestation to zero by 2021 and ensuring land rights has proven to be one of the major challenges that plague the forest sector are addressed. Major

In light of these recommendations, the international community should publicly call on the Peruvian Government to ensure the protection of environmental and land rights of indigenous peoples, including land titling and the enforcement of environmental laws, to end the violence and intimidation of indigenous peoples.

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GLOBAL KILLINGS ON THE RISE

As world leaders prepare to meet for the UN climate convention in Lima this December to discuss a global deal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, ordinary citizens are being attacked and killed for defending their land and environment from increasing threats. In April 2014, Global Witness' report Deadly Environment showed that between 2002 and 2013, there were 906 known killings of activists around the world.51 The number of killings attributable to the protection of land and the environment is subject to revision as data improves, but the rate is clearly increasing, with three times as many people killed in 2012 than in any of the 10 previous years. Latin America and Asia Pacific are the worst-affected regions, and indigenous groups particularly hard-hit overall. In many cases indigenous land rights are not recognised in law or practice, leaving communities vulnerable to exploitation by powerful economic interests that brand them as ‘anti-development’.

This crisis is poorly understood, and efforts to address it woefully inadequate. A lack of systematic monitoring means that publicly available information relating to violence against environmental and land defenders is hard to find and even harder to verify. Global Witness' attempt to quantify the global death toll should be considered a conservative estimate. This opacity is likely both a cause and effect of the culture of impunity that surrounds these deaths. Stuningly, only one per-cent of documented cases saw a conviction. National governments and judicial systems are routinely failing to protect their citizens from harm.

PERU IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Peru is the world’s fourth most dangerous country to be an environmental and land rights defender. According to Global Witness’ most recent analysis, at least 57 of such activists were killed between 2002 and the present day, with 60% of them occurring in the last four years.51 The majority of these deaths stems from conflicts over mining projects.51 Peru’s failure to adequately address community grievances around increasing pressures from extractive industries has in many cases led to violence against protestors. For example five demonstrators were killed in the highlands region of Cajamarca in 2012 in clashes with police over concerns that a proposed mine would harm the local water supply.51 Recent trends in conflict over Peru’s natural resources have pointed to the forest sector. The lack of attention shown by Peru’s government to resolve the twin problems of illegal logging and insecure land tenure has given rise to increased violence against indigenous communities. In 2013 the high profile murder of Mauro Pio Peña, an indigenous leader who spoke out against illegal logging, shone the spotlight firmly on these forest governance issues.51 This was followed in September 2014 by the murders of Edwin Chota and three members of the Ashéninka community, all indigenous environmental activists, by suspected illegal loggers.52 His colleagues were persistent denouncers of illegal logging in their home region of Ucayali in Peru’s Amazon. Since 2002 their community has been seeking legal recognition of the rights of their ancestral lands, calling for the government to deliver on its promise to formally title indigenous territories.

These deaths paint a stark portrait of the problems affecting Peru’s forest and mining sectors, calling into question the seriousness of the government’s international human rights and environmental commitments in the run-up to its hosting of the December 2014 climate conference, and demanding attention on Peru’s efforts to address these problems once the conference is over.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Peru’s government should:

- Implement and respect all of the provisions set out in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.77 The Organisation of American States’ resolution on human rights defenders,78 and relevant domestic laws to protect human rights and environmental advocates.82 This was followed in September 2014 by the murders of Edwin Chota and three members of the Ashéninka community, all indigenous environmental activists, by suspected illegal loggers.52 His colleagues were persistent denouncers of illegal logging in their home region of Ucayali in Peru’s Amazon. Since 2002 their community has been seeking legal recognition of the rights of their ancestral lands, calling for the government to deliver on its promise to formally title indigenous territories.

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- Investigate the alleged corrupt links between public officials and illegal loggers in Ucayali and prosecute where corruption is one per-cent of documented cases saw a conviction. National governments and judicial systems are routinely failing to protect their citizens from harm.

- Revolve law 30209 that weakens protections for peaceful protestors by extending immunity to Peru’s security agencies for the use of force in certain situations.

- Process pending indigenous land claims that cover over 20 million ha of forest, and realise the rights of Peru’s indigenous communities as enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

- Improve coordinated law enforcement efforts to tackle illegal logging in the forest sector, by assigning more resources to the Multi-Sectoral Commission against Illegal Logging (CMODI) and the Regional Environmental Prosecutor’s Offices.

- Investgate the alleged corrupt links between public officials and illegal loggers in Ucayali and prosecute where corruption is identified.

- Revolve law 30209 that weakens Peru’s environmental protection procedures and institutions, and prioritises investments in agriculture and the extractive sector over land where there are pending indigenous land claims; strengthen and apply adequate resources to the National Service of Environmental Certification for Sustainable Investments (SERNASEN), the body entrusted with improving Peru’s environmental impact assessment framework.82

- Recent moves by Peru’s government to strengthen environmental and land rights legislation have raised the stakes further for activists. Before his death, Edwin Chota repeatedly called for recognition of his community’s land rights and for government action to prevent illegal logging, but his calls went unheard. Unless more is done to address the underlying factors that led to Chota’s death and the impunity enjoyed by those behind his killing, environmental leaders like him will continue to be at risk. Peru’s hosting of the UN climate conference next month presents an opportunity for the country to demonstrate its commitment to protecting human rights and the environment. The lives of citizens protecting their land and environment may depend on it. Peru must seize this opportunity; the government and its policies will be on the international spotlight in December, it must not return to the shadows once that spotlight has moved.

- Revoke law 3023018 that weakens Peru’s environmental procedures and policies in the forest sector, by assigning more resources to the National Service of Environmental Certification for Sustainable Investments (SERNASEN), the body entrusted with improving Peru’s environmental impact assessment framework.82

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INDIGENOUS RIGHTS TO THEIR LAND UNDERMINED

Across Latin America, secure land tenure for indigenous communities has proven to be one of the most effective ways to reduce deforestation. But the Peruvian Government has been heavily criticized by the country’s largest indigenous network, ADIUESPEF, for its failure to prioritize the processing of over 20 million ha of pending indigenous land title applications in the Amazon. While a US$890 million ‘Declaration of Intent’ with the Government of Norway outlines measures to accelerate the titling process, it remains to be seen how committed the government of Peru is to tackling this longstanding problem.

Peru’s indigenous groups have warned that if the Norwegian deal is to be a success, Peru must first improve its ‘policy and practices on forests and indigenous peoples’ rights.’

The deaths of Chota and three other Asháninka leaders showcased the dangers of fighting for recognition of indigenous land. Ensuring secure land tenure for indigenous territories would be a sign not only of Peru’s commitment to halt forest loss but also of its desire to confront the governance problems that led to the killings of these activists.

Unfortunately, the passing of law 30230 by Peru’s Congress in July 2014 raises serious doubts over the country’s willingness to do this. The law grants extended land use rights to investors for the expansion of large-scale agriculture, mining, logging and infrastructure projects. Recent evidence indicates little has changed. For example, a recent independent analysis of Peru’s logging sector found that more than two-thirds of logging concessions inspected by the government between 2005 and 2012 were suspected of major violations of the law. The research concluded that ‘logging permits based on falsified annual plans are widely used to harvest trees in unauthorized areas.’

A 2012 report by the Environmental Investigation Agency went further in its claims, suggesting that corruption and illegality is the norm, not the exception, in Peru’s logging industry. The report tellingly highlighted the dangers faced by those attempting to change the system, emphasizing the risk of physical attack. Despite these failures in forest governance, Peru recently announced plans for an additional 5 million ha of logging concessions, potentially exacerbating an already unsatisfactory situation. Peru must undertake systemic measures to improve law enforcement efforts in the forest sector, for example by assigning more resources to the Multi-Sectoral Commission against Illegal Logging (CMLTI) and to the Regional Environmental Prosecutors Offices.

Other major threats to forest protection in Peru, like large-scale infrastructure and extractive projects, have been dogged by poor decision-making, lack of consultation, and conflict. Global Witness’ research in 2012 uncovered suspected corruption at the local government level around plans for the Punta highway, a road project that would have violated Peru’s laws on national parks and protected areas for ‘uncontacted’ indigenous peoples. In Bagua, also in the Peruvian Amazon, at least 32 people were killed in June 2009 during clashes between the police and protestors opposed to proposed laws that would have facilitated mining companies’ access to indigenous land and which indigenous communities were never consulted on.

Unless Peru’s government acts to address these underlying governance problems, its commitments to forest preservation and climate change mitigation will remain unfulfilled, and communities trying to protect their land and forests will continue to face lethal consequences.

THREATS TO FOREST PROTECTION

Peru’s vast forests face increasing threats from logging, extractive and infrastructure projects. Peru has just 73 million ha of forest covering 57 percent of its land area, the fourth largest area of tropical forest of any country. Deforestation in Peru accounts for almost half its greenhouse gas emissions, with the rate of destruction more than doubling between 2011 and 2012 to 246,000 ha annually. Widespread illegality, corruption and institutional weaknesses across the forest sector means Peru and its international partners face a daunting struggle to fulfill promises to improve outcomes for the country’s forests.

In response to these threats, at the 2009 Copenhagen climate conference, Peru announced its intention to reduce net deforestation to zero by 2020. The following year the government launched the National Program to Conserve Forests for the Mitigation of Climate Change, which aspires to conserve 54 million ha of forest. The recent agreement with Norway aims to fulfill these commitments by providing US$300 million to Peru to address forest loss in the Amazon as well as to formalize indigenous land rights.

However, for this support to be effective Peru must respect indigenous rights and reverse the recent weakening of legal protections for human rights and the environment. Implementation of measures designed to improve forest governance must be policed and properly resourced. Unfortunately, to date, law enforcement in Peru’s Amazon region has been woefully inadequate, exemplified by uncontrolled rates of illegal logging.

The rampant illegality in Peru’s logging industry illustrates the scale of the country’s forest governance problems. In 2003 the International Tropical Timber Organisation (FTTO) estimated Illegal logging to account for between 70 and 90 percent of trade. Recent evidence indicates little has changed. For example, a recent independent analysis of Peru’s logging sector found that more than two-thirds of logging concessions inspected by the government between 2005 and 2012 were suspected of major violations of the law. The research concluded that ‘logging permits based on falsified annual plans are widely used to harvest trees in unauthorized areas.’

With the passing of law 30230, the Ministry of Environment’s authority to designate protected lands exempt from industrial activity has been revoked. This has severe implications for 20 million ha of indigenous land in the Amazon that is still pending official titling, as the law is likely to allow extractive activities to encroach further into indigenous territories. Further, the law reduces the time designated for the evaluation of Environmental Impact Assessments of extractive projects. International NGOs have highlighted that this represents a contravention of the US/Peru Free Trade Agreement (FTA): The FTA prohibits both parties from ‘weakening or reducing the protections afforded in their respective environmental laws.’

Many of the killings of environmental and land defenders in Peru are attributed to conflicts between local communities and extractive projects, with opposition to mining the principle locus for violence against activists. This problem will only intensify with the weakening of environmental legislation, embodied by law 30230, in the face of efforts to increase investment in the extractive sector.

Other legal measures have contributed to the erosion of protections for activities. The recent passing of law 30165 impacts on the right to peaceful protest by granting members of the armed forces and the national police certain exemptions from criminal responsibility if they cause injury or death while on duty. Rather than strengthening legal protections for indigenous land rights and the environment, Peru appears to be moving in the opposite direction. The government must take immediate action to revoke regressive laws such as 30230 and 30165 if it is to make real progress in improving its human rights situation and halting deforestation.

REGRESSIVE LAWS MAY PROVOKE FURTHER CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

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Suspected perpetrators of known killings of environmental and land defenders in Peru between 2002 and present day

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The murder of four indigenous leaders by suspected illegal loggers

CASE STUDIES

In September 2008, in Peru’s remote Amazon region of Ucayali, four Asheninka leaders – Edwin Chota Valera, Leoncio Quincima Melendez, Jorge Ruiz Pérez and Juan Tecalito Pinedo – were murdered while travelling to neighbouring Brazil for a meeting on how to address the region’s illegal logging crisis. Days later their bodies were found, shot dead by suspected loggers. Their murders are symptomatic of wider issues in the Ucayali region: the government’s failure to recognise indigenous claims to their traditional lands, an issue Chota and other Asheninka leaders campaigned on for more than a decade; poor law enforcement and pervasive corruption that is allowing illegal logging to thrive in the Peruvian Amazon; and the gaps in institutional capacity and resources to adequately address these problems.

UCAYALI’S TIMBER “Mafia”

Illegal logging plagues the Ucayali region, which is the second largest producer of timber and the largest processing centre for forest products in Peru. Logging concessions in the region cover 7.5 million hectares of Amazon forest. In 2011, Interpol interviewed a top official and illegal logging – a situation that threatens to undermine efforts to address the issue and strengthen protective measures for environmental defenders in the region. For example, a logging company ran by the current Vice President of the Ucayali Regional Government, Carlos Hernandez, stands accused of illegal logging. Hernandez is the General Manager of a logging company called Madreoro Mashamar who operates in the Amazon. In 2010, OSINFOR, a supervisory body of the national government, filed an administration process against Madreoro Mashamar alleging that it falsely declared 4,491 cubic meters of timber cut outside its legal concession area as having originated from inside its concession. An appeal was launched by the company, but in October 2014 the judiciary in Ucayali ruled in favour of OSINFOR, opening the way for the company to be fined and stripped of the right to operate in the concession.

In a separate case, the President of the Ucayali Auditing Commission, Javier Bonilla, accused the Ucayali Regional Department of Forestry and Agriculture (DIFSAU) – the institution responsible for issuing timber felling licenses – of facilitating illegal logging through the forgery of signatures on harvesting permits from 2008 to 2011. Rampant illegal logging has also taken place in Ucayali’s Alto Purús National Park (the largest in Peru) with timber transported by planes charters run by Peru’s Army, Police and Navy, who were suspected of collusion. More recently, in 2018 the Environmental Prosecutor of Ucayali, Francisco Bermúdez, was specially ordered – a move by local media was due to the timber “mafia”, which he alleged included the Director of DIFSAU. Bermúdez has claimed that the Director allowed the flow of illegal timber. In a response to Global Witness, the Director of DIFSAU said the claims of Bermúdez were completely baseless, and that it was in fact Bermúdez who facilitated the flow of illegal timber due to their relationship. While the local Environmental Prosecutor’s Office and the Coordinator of Environmental Prosecutors that resulted in Bermúdez’s dismissal.

The struggle of the Alto Tamaya-Saweto community

Against the backdrop of government inaction and corruption, Edwin Chota and other Asheninka leaders have fought to protect the ancestral lands of their community of Alto Tamaya-Saweto, a group of 33 Asheninka families living in the Ucayali region near the Brazilian border. For decades, the Asheninka people of the Alto Tamaya-Saweto have lived in their traditional way dedicated to hunting, fishing and small-scale farming and logging. Yet the community has long been a target for illegal loggers seeking high-value species like mahogany. In a 2013 interview with National Geographic, Edwin Chota remarked on the dangers posed by illegal loggers, pointing to the conditions that would ultimately lead to his death: “They threaten us. They intimidate us. They have the guns.”

The struggle of Chota’s community is emblematic of long-standing problems that beset Peru’s Amazon region. In 2002 Peru’s government handed out much of the country’s Amazon forest to companies as logging concessions without recognizing the people who already lived there. The Alto Tamaya-Saweto community saw 66,000 ha of their forest handed out as logging concessions. In an effort to protect their forests, in July 2002 the community formally requested for their land to be recognized by the government and for the concessionaire to be legally sanctioned. In 2003, Alto Tamaya-Saweto was formally recognized as an indigenous community and began legal proceedings to claim rights over 80,000 ha of their ancestral forest. The same year, a task team created by the Director of Peru’s National Institute of Natural Resources (INRENA) recommended Saweto’s titling but reported that the titling agency Special Project for Land Titling and Rural Cadastration (PETT) and INRENA did not have sufficient financial resources to complete the titling process. One decade later the community has still not received its land title.

As far back as 1996, illegal logging along the Tamaya River, home to Chota’s community of Alto Tamaya-Saweto, was so rampant that the Peruvian government banned timber harvesting across the entire watershed. However, illegal logging continued and its community’s repeated complaints were followed up on by the authorities. By 2004, Peruvian illegal loggers had entered into the housing indigenous territory of Apurena in Brazil, where some were apprehended by the Brazilian army and the environmental protection agency IBAMA. A young Asheninka leader from Alto Tamaya-Saweto, who had warned his Brazilian indigenous relatives of the loggers’ incursions, was shot dead in the forest by unknown assailants. The same loggers were alleged to have tried to bribe Edwin Chota with US$8,000 to dissuade him and his community from their efforts to stop illegal logging.

Chota repeatedly warned regional and national authorities about the multiple threats he and the families in Alto Tamaya-Saweto received. He requested government protection for him and his family in 2005 due to continued threats by loggers, but received no response. A year later, Chota denounced the illegal logger Manuel Ríos Pezo for threatening local indigenous leaders, but again no action was taken.

Chota was murdered in July 2008 by armed men, including the company Maderera Marañón. Following the murder, Peru’s President Ollanta Humala promised an exhaustive investigation into the Killings. One of the media report suggests, however, that the investigation has been effectively paralyzed due to a lack of resources. The people behind the crime remain at large, and the widows of the deceased have been unable to return to their community for fear of further retribution. Peru’s government has finally initiated the land titling of Alto-Tamaya-Saweto, and promised to invest the equivalent of US$300,000 in development projects for the community, but serious questions need to be answered about why it took the deaths of four indigenous leaders to prompt the government to start the titling process and prosecute illegal loggers. There is still over 20 million ha of pending indigenous land tenure applications in the Peruvian Amazon. Peru must prioritize the timely and effective titling of these remaining indigenous territories, and those behind the illegal timber trade must be held accountable. Only when perpetrators realise the law is not on their side will attacks diminish.
CASE STUDIES

Lives lost in Peru’s mining sector

The mining sector in Peru, like the forest sector, is beleaguered by poor governance. Peru is currently the world’s third-biggest producer of copper and 6th largest producer of gold,96 with mining accounting for 15 percent of GDP overall97 and 5.4 percent of Peru’s total greenhouse gas emissions.98 The vast majority of mineral deposits are located near indigenous community lands99 resulting in extensive conflicts over land and the environmental impacts of mining projects. Recent studies have shown that the gold mining industry, which is prominent in the Amazon region,100 is leading to dramatic increases in deforestation and mercury poisoning, affecting the health and livelihoods of local indigenous communities.101

Global Witness’ research found that 80 percent of all killings of environmental and land activists in Peru between 2002 and 2013 stemmed from opposition to extractive projects.102 Peru’s Human Rights Ombudsman documented 1945 social conflicts generated by opposition to mining projects over the period 2006 to 2014.103 Episodes like the protests at Bagua in 2009, which led to the deaths of at least 32 people, amongst them policemen and civilians, have left a dark cloud over governance efforts to boost mining investment.104 The ongoing conflict around the Rio Blanco mine in northern Peru is indicative of the country’s failure to address persistent and serious governance issues in its mining sector.

Rio Blanco lies 50 kilometers from the border with Ecuador, in the high altitude forests of Huanacabamba and Ayabac. The project has a concession area of 6,473 ha,105 and through open pit mining aims to extract 191,000 tonnes of copper per year, making it one of the largest undeveloped copper resources in the world.106 Since the beginning of the exploration phase in 2003, the local communities of Segunda and Cajaz (in Huanacabamba) and Yanta (in Ayabac) have opposed the project and claimed that the company that owned the mining project, Minería Majaz, illegally occupied their lands.107

Protests have been prevalent throughout the mine’s history. In 1994, the company Cyprus Annacori bid for the exploration concession but withdrew after huge protest rallies were held by local communities.108 Monterrico Metals109 founded the company Minería Majaz in 2001 and obtained an exploration concession for Rio Blanco.110 The government declared the project ‘of national interest’ in 2003, despite the communities of Segunda and Cajaz unanimously rejecting it.111 In November of that same year, the Energy and Mines Ministry approved the project’s environmental impact assessment, which led to further protests during which a local community member, Herrera Racho, was killed after being struck by a teargas canister fired by police.112

Additional protests by the communities in July 2005 led to allegations that the police put hoods over demonstrator heads and beat them.113 Two female detainees also alleged that they were sexually assaulted.114 The police detained 28 protestors115 and another civilian, Melanio García, was killed during the police crackdown.116 The detained protestors claimed that their abuse under detention went on for three days and that they suffered serious injuries.117

In November 2006, the Human Rights Ombudsman’s office published a report detailing numerous illegibilities in the process that authorized the exploration concessions,118 including a failure to consult communities. Tensions eased up again in 2009, when attempts by the police to arrest suspects for damaging the mining site resulted in the deaths of two local residents, Castillo Correa Huayama and Vicente Romero Ramírez, from the Cajaz community.119 The same year eight Peruvians commenced legal proceedings in the English High Court against Monterrico Metals and its Peruvian subsidiary Rio Blanco Copper. A freezing injunction on mining activity was obtained and an out of court settlement reached in July 2011, with the company paying out compensation but not admitting liability.120 Despite these problems, Monterrico Metals have announced that operations will begin in 2015, and have reopened local offices in Huanacabamba. Commentators have claimed that this was in response to the passage of law 30230 that eased mining restrictions.121 The Rio Blanco case demonstrates Peru’s consistent prioritization of extractive industry investments over the rights of local communities.
In recent years Peru’s government has announced a series of commitments to safeguard its rainforests and stands to receive substantial international financial support to bolster its efforts, most recently through a US$800 million deal with Norway, illustrating that Peru accepts it has both a global and a national responsibility to protect its forests to mitigate climate change. But the increasing number of murders of environmental and land defenders such as Edwin Chota and his colleagues raise serious questions about the government’s real commitment to protecting the environment and those who fight to preserve it.

Peru’s forest and extractive sectors are both subject to deep social conflicts, many involving indigenous communities, and exacerbated by weak government. The government’s recent legislative measures aimed at kick-starting investment in the extractive sector have weakened key environmental safeguards and threats to both food and forest are yet further. Other laws admonishing responsibility for violent acts by Peru’s security forces will enable those of abuse against activists.

An unprecedented number of killings of environmental and land defenders have occurred over the last three years in Peru.22 This report has highlighted just a handful of these cases, which are all regrets of Peru’s environmental governance challenges and lack of political will. These killings should compel Peru to take timely and firm steps, in the run up to the 2014 UN climate conference and beyond, to address the underlying causes that give rise to the killings. If Peru wants to be a world leader in the fight against climate change, it should start by protecting the environmental defenders who are its best allies in achieving that aim.

ENDNOTES