Translation By Kimberly Kern

Tekojoja, which means 'equality' in the Guaraní language, is the same community that, between 2002 and 2005, was repeatedly attacked by police and soy farmers, who destroyed crops, burnt houses, arrested residents, and eventually killed two of them.

The residents, with the help of the MAP, eventually won their case against the soy farmers in September 2006, but other farmers who have full title to land near the community, have continued to cultivate soy and to use pesticides irresponsibly around houses, roads, water sources and schools.

On October 24th, 2007, after the MAP repeatedly denounced the environmental crimes, the community was visited by

functionaries from SENAVE (the National Department of Plant and Seed Quality Control) and the SEAM (the Secretariat of the Environment). During that intervention, two owners of soy fields that border the community promised to respect the following provisions of the environmental laws:

Mr. Jorge Diemer, who own 7.5 hectares of soybeans, agreed to use only a portable sprayer (a backpack) for those parts of his field closer than 50 meters to the road and 100 meters from the community.

Mr. Loribaldo Birch, who owns 15 hectares, agreed to stop planting crops requiring pesticides, and to comply with all environmental laws surrounding their use.

Nonetheless, on Sunday the 28th, police and private armed

guards arrived in the community to oversee the spraying of other similar properties, again with complete disregard for environmental laws. When members of the MAP confronted the guards about their actions, the latter were verbally abusive and threatened local residents.

Until now, the authorities have ignored our constant requests while the harvest continues. On the 1st of November, Antonio Vazquez arrived to spray his soy field. Vasquez is the supposed owner of a property previously claimed by Nestor Opperman, brother of Ademir Opperman, who has not been seen since he escaped custody after murdering two campesinos in Tekojoja.

Residents arrived at Vazquez' lot to try to stop the fumigation, and were confronted with five police officers from the district (led by Osvaldo Vasquez, son of the supposed owner) and members of the local Citizens Security Commission, a vigilante squad led by Vasquez himself.

Again we were verbally abused, and death threats were made against Antonio Galeano.

During the initial visit by SEAM and SENAVE officials, police were informed that Vazquez was breaking environmental laws.

Nonetheless, instead of working in the zone to uphold those laws, they act as the private security guards of large landholders.

On top of the suffering caused by the violation of environmental laws, residents of the community have to live with constant threats from their own supposed authorities, abetted by local vigilantes.

In the face of these continuing threats, the MAP is requesting:

The urgent intervention by the National Service of Vegetable and Seed Quality and Sanitation (Servicio Nacional de Calidad y Sanidad Vegetal y de Semillas, SENAVE) and Paraguay's Secretariat of the Environment (Secretaría del Ambiente de la República del Paraguay, SEAM) in six communities where similar problems are occurring

The monitoring of landowners who are violating environmental laws

A study of pollution in the community and the health of its members

The cooperation and participation of all institutions charged with enforcing environmental laws

That all police and armed civilians abstain from participating in the harvest and the spraying of monocultures and get back to their duty, which is the protection of the wellbeing of Paraguayan citizens.

We categorically blame the government for all of these crimes and aggressions that continue only because of their completely dysfunctional approach to the laws that protect the population.

As the true residents of this community, we denounce and will continue denouncing all violations of our rights.

Jorge Galeano

Leader of the MAP

TAKE ACTION NOW!!!

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Members of the MAP in the community of Tekojoja are trying to defend themselves from agrochemical spraying on neighbouring soy monoculture crops. MAPs leader Antonio Galeano received death threats because of this. (Read the Press Release of the MAP above for more info).

In the case of Paraguay's Alto Paraná Farmer's Association (Asociacion de Agricultores de Alto Paraná, ASAGRAPA), farmers are receiving legal denounces and threats in response to their efforts to bring forth a case of a 3 years old boy that died on August 13th, probably as a consequence of intoxication by agrochemicals used on soy monocultures. When ASAGRAPA asked for a disinterment of the body on October 17th to be able to realise studies to determine the exact cause of death, a few days later one of ASAGRAPA's main leaders, Tomas Zayas, received denounces for disturbing the public peace and impeding the production by the soy producers of the region. The president of the Soy Producer's Union (Asociación de Productores de Soja, APS), the Paraguayan soy lobby,

Claudia Ruser, is even accusing Zayas publicly of promoting an internal civil war [1].

Also in other communities in the regions where MAP and ASAGRAPA are active, witnesses testify that the health situation is aggravating and that intimidation by the soy producers is increasing. This shows that conflicts over land and resources are intensifying, and that criminalisation of social organisations is becoming more rampant.

This situation is particularly alarming because contamination with agrochemical severly affects biodiversity, the permanence of the farmers on their lands, their sovereignty and their human rights.

We are asking you to send faxes, letters and emails to governmental institutions in Paraguay to support the peasant farming organisations ASAGRAPA (Asociación de Agricultores del Alto Paraná) and MAP (Movimiento Agrario y Popular). Find a sample fax on
www.aseed.net
or
www.lasojamata.org
. updates will also be posted here). Members of these organisations are facing death threats, accusations and violence since the start of the soy cultivation season this year.

Please send faxes and/or emails (in CC to soy@aseed.net) to the addresses and people mentioned
here
. The list is long, so if short in time the first are of most importance.

In Paraguay this is an effective means of putting pressure on government institutions (expecially from abroad) that really can

make a difference.

Thanks for your support!

Note! When faxing to the numbers below, you have to request the fax tone mentioning the urgency of the fax for the senator.

[1] press article from newspaper ABC in full text (spanish) on

http://www.lasojamata.org/?q=node/87

The community of Tekojoja in Eastern Paraguay has once again found itself under attack, and the Popular Agrarian Movement (Movimiento Agrario y Popular, MAP), the peasant organization involved in the community, is publicly denouncing

those responsible. Ever since the beginning of the 2007/08 soy harvest, this small community has suffered the effects of contamination and violence, and an increased disregard for the applicable environmental laws (specifically Law 123/91, Decree 2048/04 and Resolution 485/03).