

24 April 2018

## Peru: Killing of indigenous human rights defender, Olivia Arévalo Lomas

On 19 April 2018, **Olivia Arévalo Lomas**, a woman human rights defender and spiritual leader of the Shipibo-Konibo indigenous peoples, was killed by unknown assailants just a few feet from her home in the community of 'Victoria Gracia', in Coronel Portillo Province, Ucayalí, Peru. The defender was shot in the chest and died instantly. Her body was left on the street in full view of her local community.

[Olivia Arévalo Lomas](#) was an indigenous spiritual leader and active defender of the cultural and environmental rights of the Shipibo-Konibo. Shipibo-Konibo are part of the Federación de Comunidades Nativas del Ucayalí y Afluentes (Federation for the Native Communities of the Ucayalí and Affluents – [FECONAU](#)), which represents more than thirty indigenous communities in the Ucayali region and advocates for the recognition of indigenous communities' rights and the preservation of their ancestral territories. Olivia Arévalo, as a wise indigenous woman, was also responsible for the traditional knowledge of this ethnic group. She was known for cultivating traditional medicine and the sacred songs of her people (Íkaros), which are a transversal element of their culture and expression of their harmonious relationship with nature. Olivia Arévalo Lomas is believed to have been targeted in an effort to strike at the heart of the Shipibo-Konibo and discourage the community from pursuing their rights.

The ancestral territory of the Shipibo people in the Peruvian Amazon faces complete deforestation due to the expansion of palm oil plantations. Shipibo-Konibo leaders have publicly denounced the corruption of the Regional Government of Ucayalí and the municipal authorities in the District of Nueva Requena, which have been supportive of the expansion of palm oil plantations in the region. Instead of titling the community's ancestral lands, Ucayalí's Regional Department for Agriculture has continued to publicly undermine the indigenous communities' bid for legal recognition of their lands and issue certificates of possession to individuals who have settled in the area, under the pretext of rice cultivation, to engage in land grabbing.

The killing of Olivia Arévalo Lomas comes after a spike in violence, threats and intimidation against members of FECONAU communities in Ucayalí, such as [Santa Clara de Uchunya](#). In the past six months, several members of FECONAU have been subjects of attacks. A representative of FECONAU, Edinson Mahua, was shot at close range and narrowly escaped serious injury, while community leaders in Ucayalí have received anonymous death threats.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the killing of Olivia Arévalo Lomas and expresses deep concern at the escalating violence against indigenous communities and leaders in the Peruvian Amazon.

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

1. Strongly condemn the killing of human rights defender and Shipibo-Konibo leader, Olivia Arévalo Lomas;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of FECONAU members, in coordination with the defenders;
3. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the assassination of Olivia Arévalo Lomas, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Peru are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.