

Murder of Indigenous Land and Human Rights defender casts a shadow over the opening of COP28

Environmental defender Quinto Inuma Alvarado was shot and killed by hooded men in response to his work defending his land from illegal logging and drug trafficking in the San Martín region of Peru (valle del Chipurana).

On the afternoon of 29 November, admired Kichwa Indigenous leader and Peruvian environmental defender Quinto Inuma Alvarado was murdered on his way back to his community in Santa Rosillo de Yanayacu (San Martín region) from Pucallpa (Ucayali region) where he attended an event for human rights defenders.

“This is why we are threatened, because we are resisting,” Quinto Inuma said at the [Latin America regional meeting](#) of the Zero Tolerance Initiative in 2022.

“We are resisting against all illegal acts and for the truth, always believing that the forest is our life. When they predate the forests, this is where our food and our life is, where the water is that we have taken care of ancestrally,” he said.

Quinto’s assassination took place just as the United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP 28) in Dubai is opening, where States, including Peru, will discuss measures aimed to address the climate crisis and find concrete solutions to reduce emissions and protect lives and livelihoods.

Indigenous environmental defenders like Quinto risk their lives to protect the environment and address the climate crisis, yet they lack ‘adequate protection and are excluded from decision making’, according to a [Global Witness report from 2022](#).

“We are witnessing an emerging pattern of killings [of land and environmental defenders] in the Amazon [...]. In a context of the worsening climate emergency; protecting the Amazon is one of the most urgent actions we must take to avert the worst consequences of our planetary crisis,” urges the Global Witness Report.

Quinto had spent years denouncing threats to the territories of his community, Santa Rosillo de Yanayacu, and was working to achieve collective titling for his community, which would allow them to effectively protect their land and forests of the Peruvian Amazon.

In the context of COP28, the Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest (AIDSESP) shared a [statement](#) condemning the murder of Quinto Inuma and rejecting the ineffectiveness of the Peruvian state to implement effective protection mechanisms:

“Can we talk about climate change mitigation and adaptation measures if the safety of indigenous peoples and the protection of their defenders are not guaranteed?” poses the statement by AIDSESP

Similarly, the Coordinating Committee for the Development and Defence of Indigenous Peoples of the San Martín Region (CODEPISAM), a regional organisation that included the community of Quinto, issued a strong statement:

"This has to stop. Lives are so precious that they cannot continue to be extinguished as if they were worthless, while they continue to cry out for justice and special attention to a State that shoots with silence," the communication said.

"How many more lives have to be extinguished before this [...] Congress of the Republic will prioritise a Law on Human Rights Defenders?", CODEPISAM asks.

As a result of his work, Quinto had been receiving threats since 2017 which led him to do advocacy work with numerous entities - such as the Ombudsman's office, various ministries, such as Justice and Culture, and the Inter-American Court on Human Rights - to halt threats to him and other defenders in his community.

Quinto was also a Steering Group member of the Zero Tolerance Initiative working to address the root causes of killings and violence against human rights defenders linked to the global supply chains, and had commented on the multiple threats that he and other indigenous leaders and human rights defenders receive for their work to protect their land and rights:

"So many years of suffering, I see no results. What have we received? Physical and psychological abuse. For the Peruvian state, with the corruption that exists today, informality trumps legality. If we assert our legal rights, they don't believe us. Illegality wins. That's the country we live in" Quinto Inuma Alvarado said in 2020 in a report [Ending Impunity](#)

Quinto's murder is one of almost [5000 attacks on defenders](#), raising concerns about business-related harms, that Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (BHRRC) documented since 2015. BHRRC said:

"The killing of Quinto represents an attack on human rights defenders everywhere – as well as on their allies. This appalling killing comes amid high-sounding proclamations in support of the role of HRDs at the UN Forum on Business & Human Rights this week and COP28, which kicked off today. These words are meaningless if they are not matched by actions. Quinto was killed for opposing illegal logging, protecting his and other communities, and for demanding Indigenous Peoples' rights be respected. By doing this, he was protecting the planet: illegal logging is a driver of deforestation and climate change, as well as is a major business and human rights [issue](#)."

"Instead of being celebrated for his leadership, Quinto was cruelly assassinated. We express our solidarity with Quinto's family, support the [demands](#) of AIDSESEP and [call](#) on state parties at COP28 to commit to climate action which firmly puts the protection of Indigenous, human rights and environmental defenders at the core of the energy transition. The energy transition will not be just and is likely to fail, if defenders continue to be attacked. Additionally, we call on companies from all sectors to adopt policy commitments to zero tolerance of attacks on HRDs in their supply chains accompanied by robust implementation and evaluation of their effectiveness."

A statement by Forest Peoples Programme, an NGO that worked closely with Quinto Inuma, said:

"The death of Quinto Inuma Alvarado not only represents the loss of a brave Kichwa defender, but also serves as a wake-up call to the urgent need for concrete action to protect human rights defenders and Indigenous communities in the Amazon region."

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[Statement by Forest Peoples Programme](#)

[Report: Ending Impunity – Confronting the drivers of violence and forest destruction on the agribusiness and extractives frontier in the Peruvian Amazon](#)