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Peru

Hugo Blanco arrested for supporting farmers' struggle

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On October 2nd, Hugo Blanco, ex peasant-leader and ever-present social activist, was arrested on orders of the court of Paruro, and taken to a cell in the court of Cusco. According to Peruvian law, senior citizens over the age of 70 should not be incarcerated. Mr Blanco is 73 years old and has previously suffered a brain hemorrhage.

(Update: Hugo Blanco is free. His [statement in Spanish is here](#).)

[https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/pe_Hugo_Blanco.jpg]

Hugo Blanco

Photo: Soldepaz Pachakuti

The background is an illegal occupation of land belonging to the indigenous community of Huanquite – Paruro (near Cusco, Peru), by the son of an ex-landowner. 50 years ago the landowner Paz was famous for branding his farmers with the same burning stick that he used to brand his animals. Hugo Blanco led the land struggle that resulted in the farmers themselves gaining ownership of the land.

It is this same land that Paz' son is now illegally occupying. The police have taken the side of the landowner against the community, and have accused the farmers and Hugo Blanco of 'Resistance to authority'. They could not accuse the farmers of land occupation, since they actually hold the deeds for the land. In this accusation, they included Mr Blanco for having supported the community on previous occasions, despite the fact that he was not even there on the day the farmers decided to take back the land that is legally theirs.

Since he was not notified that he was accused of 'Resistance to authority', he did not present himself to give a statement. Therefore the judge ordered his arrest. Tomorrow he will be taken to Paruro to give his statement.

We call on all political organisations, the media and defenders of Human Rights, to show solidarity and spread this news. Let us hope that this case will be solved quickly, and that it will serve to expose the systematic abuses against the indigenous, in this community as well as in many others, who are the legitimate owners of the land, but have been oppressed for centuries.

Let us also show the authorities that the national and international solidarity are aware of the increasing tendencies to criminalize social struggle and social activists in Peru.

Please send protest letters to the Peruvian embassy as well as releasing statements.

Use this letter!

Here below is a version of a letter that you can use. Please also send a copy of all letters to Lucha Indigena, the newspaper edited by Hugo Blanco, and to myself, in order to keep a record of solidarity.

Peruvian Embassy: postmaster@peruembassy-uk.com

Lucha Indigena: luchaindigena@yahoo.es

Oscar Blanco Berglund: oscar.berglund@uwe.ac.uk

Dear Mr Ricardo Luna,

I/We write to you with a complaint against the police and court of Huanquite, Paruro, Cusco, Peru for having arrested Mr Hugo Blanco, accusing him and the local farmers of 'resistance to authority'. We know that the farmers retook land, for which they hold the deeds, but which the son of an ex-landowner illegally occupied. However, we also know that Mr Blanco was not even present when these acts took place.

I/We ask you to investigate this case, since it seems to form part of an increasing tendency to criminalize social protests and indigenous and social activists in Peru. We also ask you to help clarifying the legal ownership of the land, in order to stop this abuse of the community by the very people that should protect their rights.

Yours sincerely.

Media reaction

The international media was fast to react to the news of Blanco's arrest. Google News syndicated this article and one from [Prensa Latina](#). The story was also quickly reported across Latin America, notably by [La República](#), [La Jornada](#) and [Peru Informa](#).

The protest of María Blanco Berglund, Hugo's wife, against the arrest was cited by the [Diario El Sol de Cusco](#). An [appeal for solidarity](#) was also issued quickly by the [Congreso Bolivariano de los Pueblos](#) (Bolivarian Peoples Congress). La República later reported [the Socialist Party's support](#) for Hugo Blanco.

Carmen Blanco Valer has [written in Sur y Sur](#) in support of her father. International Viewpoint has also published an [Italian appeal](#) while La Gauche has published the [appeal in French](#).