

URGENT ACTION

FREE ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDER

Vidal Brítez was detained on March 26 in Paso Yobái, Guairá because he was expressing his right to defend a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. The Prosecutor's Office has stated that Vidal participated in an incident which he did not take part in. We are urging the Prosecutor's Office to respect Mr Brítez's right to freedom of expression, including the right to protest, and to drop the charges so that he can be released.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: May 15, 2025

TAKE ACTION:

- Write a letter to the government official(s) listed. Use the sample letter below as a guide or use your own words.
- [Click here](#) to report your action(s) on UA 33.25. We share this number with the officials we are trying to persuade.

Note: This is an email to target action only.

Dr. Emiliano Rolón Fernández

Email: comunicaciones@ministeriopublico.gov.py

Dear Dr. Rolón,

I am writing to you because I am very worried about Vidal Brítez. He is a respected leader in Paraguay who helps to protect the right to food and to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. He plays a **critical** role in defending against **pollution** in Paso Yobái.

Amnesty International is concerned that he was arrested because of his **activism** for the environment. His family is also very worried about his health because he suffers from a severe asthma condition.

According to the **international law on human rights**, governments are obligated to **protect** and **respect** human rights as well the right to defend human rights. Arresting and charging Mr. Brítez for his activism breaks international human rights law and discourages other **human rights defenders** from **advocating** for a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. Paraguay also has an **obligation** to ensure that Vidal has a **fair trial**.

I urge you to drop the charges against Mr. Brítez and respect the right to defend human rights in Paraguay.

Yours Sincerely,

[Your Name]



BACKGROUND INFORMATION



Vidal Brítez (pictured in photo speaking at a community gathering) is 56 years old and grows **yerba mate**, a traditional South American tea made from leaves and stems. Mr. Brítez is a community leader and president of the Santa Maria's Association of Yerba Mate Producers in Paso Yobái. He works hard to defend the right to food and **protests** against the pollution that is caused by **gold mining exploitation** in the area.

The companies that mine for gold use harmful chemicals like **mercury** and **cyanide** which are very harmful to the

environment. The pollution has made it difficult to grow yerba mate, a national symbol in Paraguay. Yerba mate growers have filed formal complaints against the **environmental crimes** that continue to take place but **illegal** polluting practices continue.

On January 10, 2025, there was an **altercation** between a local resident of Paso Yobái who mines gold and a neighbor who grows yerba mate. With the help of a **court order** and the National Police, the gold miner brought trucks filled with mining waste onto the yerba grower's property which resulted in stones being thrown with slingshots. Due to this incident, the police opened a **criminal case** against 6 members of the Yerba Producers Association, including Mr. Brítez, who was not present at the time of this incident. He was at home during this time about 3 miles away.

Mr. Brítez's family is concerned about his asthma condition and believe that his arrest and the stress caused by this arrest could make him very sick.

Learning Activities

- [Vocabulary Chart](#)
- [The Universal Declaration of Human Rights Worksheet](#)
- [Tips for Letter Writing](#)
- [UA 33.25 Additional Classroom Activities](#)