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First UA: 33/25 Index: AMR 45/9204/2025 Paraguay of April 1, 2025

## PARAGUAY

### FREE ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDER VIDAL BRÍTEZ

On March 26, authorities in Paso Yobái, Guairá, arrested environmental defender Vidal Brítez in retaliation for his efforts to protect a clean and healthy environment. Prosecutors are accusing him of serious coercion for an incident he had no involvement in. We urge the Prosecutor's Office to uphold his legal rights and drop the charges so he can be freed.

#### Write to the Attorney General urging him to:

- Drop the charges against Vidal Brítez
- Respect and protect the right to defend human rights in Paraguay.

#### Write to:

Dr. Emiliano Rolón Fernández  
Calle Chile y Avda. Ygatimi  
Asunción - Paraguay  
Email: [comunicaciones@ministeriopublico.gov.py](mailto:comunicaciones@ministeriopublico.gov.py)  
Salutation: *Dear Dr. Rolón,*

#### And copy:

His Excellency Raul Antonio Montiel Gastó  
Ambassador  
Embassy of the Republic of Paraguay  
130 Albert Street, Suite 418  
Ottawa, ON K1P 1B1  
Tel: (613) 567-1283 / 1005  
Email: [embaparcana@mre.gov.py](mailto:embaparcana@mre.gov.py)

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Vidal Brítez Alcaraz, a 56-year-old yerba mate producer, leads the Santa María Association of Yerba Mate Producers in Paso Yobái, Paraguay. He has been a strong advocate for healthy food and has spoken out against pollution caused by mining in the region. Paso Yobái, located in Guairá, is a hub for gold mining, with companies like Latin American Minerals Paraguay Lampa SA and CEMA SA operating there. In 2022, [United Nations expert Marcos Orellana confirmed](#) that the use of mercury and cyanide in mining was causing severe environmental harm.

[Yerba mate](#), a national symbol of Paraguay, has been directly affected by mining contamination. Farmers have reported financial losses due to polluted crops and the loss of markets for their products. Despite filing multiple complaints with the regional prosecutor's office in Villarrica, they have seen no action to stop illegal and harmful mining practices.

On January 10, 2025, [tensions escalated](#) when a court granted a miner the right to transport materials through a yerba mate producer's land. With police assistance, trucks carrying mining waste forced their way in, sparking a confrontation between miners and local farmers. Authorities later charged six yerba mate producers with serious crimes, including Vidal Brítez—despite clear evidence that he was five kilometers away at home with his employees when the incident occurred. His wrongful detention has raised concerns about his health, as he suffers from asthma and may not receive proper care in custody.

***Please take action as soon as possible until May 25, 2025. The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.***