



AMERICA/PERU – A religious woman receives the award for Human Rights

Bagua (Agenzia Fides) - Sister Maria del Carmen Gomez Calleja, of the Congregation of St. Joseph, received the National Award for Human Rights 2013, whereas the priest Gerald Veilleux was nominated for the Special Award given annually by the National Commission of Human Rights of Peru. The awards were presented on the occasion of the Universal Day of Human Rights, as an act of recognition for those who work in defense of fundamental rights in Peru.

The Spanish missionary works in the Vicariate of San Francisco, in Bagua, in the forest in the north of Peru. The note sent to Fides Agency reports that Sister Maricarmen refused to sign an official report which highlighted irregularities regarding the social conflict in Bagua; she still continues to work to clarify the events and political responsibilities that gave rise to the tragic conflict nicknamed "Baguazo" (see Fides 05/06/2010) where about thirty people were killed.

For 45 years, the congregation of St. Joseph has helped the indigenous peoples of the Peruvian Amazon, in Bagua, and has since then been committed to the promotion of Awajun indigenous women. Sister Maria del Carmen has been working in this region for six years, and believes that her experience "is part of this beautiful history, in which the Awajún woman is now an educated woman. The women teachers in our educational center were first students and therefore the contact with this culture is part of these people". (CE) (Agenzia Fides 18/12/2013)