Venezuela: detention linked to Smurfit

Melvis Molina, president of the Environmental Group of the village of Morador in the state of Portuguesa was arrested. The Environmental Group stated that the judge's decision was the result of pressures from Smurfit's lawyers and accused the company of responding with judicial terrorism to the recent visit of WRM's international coordinator, which they hope will result in raising international awareness about the ecological and social disaster caused by this company. It is also believed that the arrest is a revenge on Molina and his family, for his persistent criticism in the local press regarding the social and environmental impact of Smurfit's plantations.

The Group added that local people will continue confronting the environmental destruction and human rights violations, as well as the deforestation of natural forests which the multinaltional continues carrying out with the complicity of the Ministry of the Environment.

Upon receiving news about this situation, the WRM secretariat, in direct contact with the Environment Committee of the Venezuelan Senate, circulated the information contained in this bulletin within the country prior to its publication. We are pleased to inform that, with the active participation of the Land Committee's lawyer, Dr Rafael Gonzalez, Melvis Molina was finally released on bail after having been in detention for several days.

Source: El Regional, 9/12/98; Environment Committee of the Venezuelan Senate