Jaime Turon, mayor of the politically troubled Venezuelan state of Amazonas and a member of its indigenous Ye'kwana people, will speak about the struggles of his homeland Wednesday, June 2, at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Amazonas, recently created and bordering Brazil and Colombia, is mostly populated by native Ye'kwana and Yanomamo people and is facing multiple crises posed by disease, cocaine smuggling, renegade mining and logging and political strife that could erupt into guerrilla war. Turon, the top elected official in the region, and his native people often find themselves at odds with the aims of Catholic Salesian Missionaries and others in the Venezuelan federal government. Since his election as the state alcalde (mayor) two years ago, Turon repeatedly has been threatened, harassed and physically attacked by his opponents, supporters say.

Turon and six associates are making a week-long visit to the UCSB campus as the guests of Napoleon Chagnon, professor of anthropology, who has studied the people of the region for 35 years. Wednesday's talk will be held at 12:30 p.m. in the Multicultural Center. A reception will follow. Turon will speak again at 12:30 p.m. Thursday in Room 2001 of the Humanities and Social Sciences Building. On Friday, Turon and his associates are expected to market baskets made in their region at the University Center market.
About UC Santa Barbara

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