

PUBLIC

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UA 102/05

Fear for safety/death threats

27 April 2005

ECUADOR

Jesús Tranquilino Vélez Loor (m)

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Jesús Tranquilino Vélez Loor who was allegedly tortured in February and received death threats twice in April 2005. He has filed a complaint against the three private security guards who allegedly tortured him, and may have been threatened in an attempt to make him withdraw his complaint.

On 1 February, Jesús Vélez was reportedly stopped in the city of Guayaquil by three private security guards who forced him into a blue van marked with the logo of a private security company. At no time was Jesús Vélez told why he had been stopped. Once inside the van, two of the guards reportedly took his wallet and beat him on the head with a truncheon. His arms were also burned with a cigarette. He was then taken to the Metropolitan Police Station, where he remained in detention for 24 hours on charges of "*ocupación de la vía pública*" [peddling in the streets without a permit], before being released with a fine. Jesús Vélez filed a complaint against the three security guards who allegedly tortured him with the prosecutor's office on 9 February. To date, Amnesty International is not aware of whether an investigation has been open into his allegations.

On 13 April, an anonymous caller reportedly telephoned Jesús Vélez's neighbour and asked if she knew him. When she said she knew him, the caller identified himself as a belonging to the security company which employed the guards who reportedly tortured Jesús Vélez. He told her, "tell that son of a bitch not to f*** our life, because we are following him, we are walking behind him, we are close to catching him, we are going to kill him", ("*Señora, somos de la compañía de seguridad ... dígale a ese hijo de puta que no nos joda la vida porque lo estamos siguiendo, le estamos pisando los talones, estamos cerca de agarrarle, lo vamos a matar*").

On 17 April, Jesús Vélez's neighbour reportedly received a second threatening phone call from the same person who had called earlier. The caller told her "we all agreed that Jesús Vélez will be killed: the police, the security company and the prosecutor, so you tell that son of a bitch to stop filing complaints, otherwise we are going to find out where he lives and we are going to place a bomb" ("*todos estamos de acuerdo en que matemos a Jesús Vélez: la policía, la compañía de seguridad y la fiscal, así que aconseje a ese hijo de puta que no siga denunciando, de lo contrario vamos [a] averiguar donde vive para ponerle una bomba*").

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has on several occasions expressed its deep concern about the continued acts of intimidation against victims of torture and ill-treatment who report such crimes. The organisation has also expressed its concern about the intimidation of their relatives, lawyers and human rights defenders who support them in their search for justice.

The organization has repeatedly urged the Ecuadorean authorities to condemn any act of torture or ill-treatment against detainees and the threats against those who report such crimes. Ecuadorian authorities have also been urged to guarantee that such crimes are investigated promptly, independently and impartially and that the perpetrators are brought to justice. To date the vast majority of allegations of torture and ill-treatment of detainees remain unpunished and to Amnesty International's knowledge no one has been brought to trial in connection to any of the allegations of acts of intimidation against victims of torture and ill-treatment, their relatives or lawyers.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Jesús Tranquilino Vélez Loor who reportedly received two death threats after filing a complaint of torture against three private security guards;
- urging the authorities to do everything in their power to guarantee his safety, in accordance with his wishes;
- calling for a prompt, impartial and independent investigation into the death threats and allegations of torture against Jesús Tranquilino Vélez Loor, for the findings to be made public and those responsible to be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to guarantee that any private security guards involved in law enforcement are subject to national regulations to ensure strict accountability and international standards for law enforcement officials;
- urging the authorities to ensure that they do not employ any law enforcement personnel with a record of human rights violations.

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Mauricio Gándara
Ministro de Gobierno, Policía,
Justicia, Cultos y Municipalidades
Ministerio de Gobierno y Policía
Benalcázar y Espejo
Quito, Ecuador

Fax: + 593 2 295 8360 (If someone answers, please ask for the fax: "Tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Dear Minister/Señor Ministro

Acting Attorney General

Dra. Cecilia Armas
Ministra Fiscal Subrogante
Fiscalía General del Estado
Av. Eloy Alfaro N°32-240 y República
Quito, Ecuador

Fax: + 593 2 2558 561 (If someone answers, please ask for the fax: "Tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Dear Acting Attorney General/Señora Fiscal General Subrogante

COPIES TO:

Human rights' organization

Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos (CDH)
Quisquis 1207 y Esmeraldas 4° piso Oficina 403
Guayaquil, Ecuador

Fax: + 593 4 229 3273 (If someone answers, please ask for the fax: "Tono de fax, por favor")

and to diplomatic representatives of Ecuador accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 8 June 2005.