

PUBLIC

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UA 324/05

Fear for safety/death threats

20 December 2005

PERU

Staff of human rights organization COMISEDH

People believed to be linked to the security forces have threatened staff of the nationwide human rights organisation Comisión de Derechos Humanos (COMISEDH). The organization is involved in preparing testimony to support the prosecution of perpetrators of human rights violations. The number of these prosecutions has increased greatly in 2005, and the intimidation of COMISEDH appears to be intended to silence the victims of human rights violations and those who are trying to help them in their legitimate pursuit of justice.

On 14 December at about noon the word *muerte* (death) was written twice on a COMISEDH staff member's car, which was parked near the organization's offices in the city of Ayacucho, capital of the southern department of Ayacucho. In June 2005 a witness in the prosecution of a retired army general was shot at from a car on the streets of the capital, Lima, despite the fact that he had a bodyguard with him who returned fire (see further information on UA 259/04, 3 June 2005, AMR 46/006/2005).

The COMISEDH offices in Lima and Ayacucho have been burgled at least twice since September, with no apparent motive other than to intimidate them and disrupt their work. On 13 September, the burglars cut their telephone and internet access cables.

COMISEDH staff throughout Peru have been assisting victims of human rights violations committed by the police and army during the internal armed conflict of 1980-2000, and of violations that have taken place since the conflict ended.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Peruvian government set up the *Comisión de Verdad y Reconciliación*, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in 2000, to bring to justice those who carried out human rights violations during the internal armed conflict. The Commission published its final report in 2003, and since then the victims, their relatives, witnesses, and those working on their behalf during investigations and trials have suffered increasing threats and intimidation.

The lack of protection for these people is such that the office of the Ombudsman (Defensoría del Pueblo) expressed serious concern and urged the authorities to guarantee that they would be effectively protected, in its September 2005 report, entitled *Two years from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. At present this is particularly important, only recently the Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos, an umbrella organization in Peru presented a report before the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights on 46 women and men that have been harassed, intimidated and threatened in this context during 2005.

It is vitally important that human rights defenders are able to carry out their legitimate activities without fear. The UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organizations of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 9 December 1998 (more commonly known as the "UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders") and the OAS Resolutions of June 1999 and June 2000 on Human Rights Defenders in the Americas call on member states to intensify their efforts to protect them and promote their work.

If the Peruvian authorities are serious about protecting and promoting human rights, they must send a clear message that they will not tolerate intimidation or harassment of human rights defenders.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of all staff of COMISEDH;
- urging the authorities to take all the steps that COMISEDH have asked for to guarantee the safety of their members;
- urging the authorities to carry out an independent and impartial investigation of the repeated intimidation of COMISEDH, making the results public and bringing those responsible to justice;
- urging the authorities to send a clear public message that they will not tolerate intimidation and harassment of human rights defenders.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Rómulo Pizarro Tomasio
Ministro del Interior, Ministerio del Interior
Plaza 30 de Agosto s/n, Urb. Córpac, San Isidro
Lima 27, PERU

Fax: + 51 1 225 7234

Salutation: Dear Minister/Estimado Sr. Ministro

Attorney General

Dra. Adelaida Bolívar Arteaga
Fiscal de la Nación, Fiscalía de la Nación
Av. Abancay, cuadra 5 s/n, Lima 1, PERU

Fax: + 51 1 427 1792

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Estimada Sra. Fiscal de la Nación

Ayacucho Department Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Ricardo Cornejo Alpaca
Fiscal Superior Decano del Distrito Judicial de Ayacucho
Jr. Libertad Nro. 539, Huamanga, Ayacucho, Peru

Fax: + 51 66 31-2534 (ask for "tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Estimado Sr. Fiscal Superior

Ayacucho Chief of Police

Coronel Haroldo Ocampo Ríos
Jefe Región Policial Ayacucho, Jr. 28 de Julio Nro. 325, Ayacucho, Peru

Fax: + 51 66 31-2055 (ask for "tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Dear Colonel/Estimado Coronel

COPIES TO:

COMISEDH

Jr. Horacio Urteaga 704, Jesús María, Apartado Postal 11-0237, Lima, PERU

Fax: + 51 1 423 3876

E-mail: comisedh@amauta.rcp.net.pe

and to diplomatic representatives of Peru accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 31 January 2006.