

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 53/004/2005

21 June 2005

Further Information on UA 226/04 (AMR 53/011/2004, 16 July 2004) and follow-ups (AMR 53/020/2004, 29 October 2004, and AMR 53/001/2005, 25 January 2005) - Fear for safety/Death threats

VENEZUELA

Oscar Barrios (m), nephew of Luis Barrios
Carolina García (f), wife of Luis Barrios
Elvira Barrios (f)]
Oneida Barrios (f), mother of Jorge and Rigoberto]
Eloisa Barrios (f)]
Irés Barrios (f)] brothers and sisters of
Pablo Storzano (m)] Narciso and Luis Barrios
Beatriz Barrios (f)]
Juan Barrios (m)]
Jorge Barrios (m), aged 15
Justina Barrios (f), grandmother of Caudy, Rigoberto and Jorge

Killed: Rigoberto Barrios (m), aged 16 (previously given as 'Rigo')
Luis Barrios (m), brother of Narciso Barrios

On 18 June, an attempt was made on the life of Oscar Barrios as he left the house of the widow of Luis Barrios who was allegedly killed by the police in September 2004. This is the most recent in a series of attacks, threats and acts of intimidations against the Barrios family since they filed a complaint about the police killing of Narciso Barrios in 2003. Members of the family have been detained by police several times and Amnesty International believes that they are in grave danger.

Five unidentified armed men, wearing civilian clothes, reportedly pursued Oscar Barrios and attempted to shoot him as he was leaving the home of Carolina García, the widow of Luis Barrios. Oscar Barrios was apparently able to escape by hiding behind some brushwood as the men left in a car. His mother, Elvira Barrios called the police agency responsible for their protection following the attempt on his life, but no one was reportedly sent to their home to take statements.

In May 2005, the family was granted police protection following instructions from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights', as well as international and national pressure from human rights organizations, including Amnesty International. However, police officers reportedly only visit the Barrios family sporadically and all the police officers implicated in the threats and killings against the family have yet to be dismissed or prosecuted.

A day after the attack in the town of Guanayen in Aragua State, three men wearing balaclavas and civilian clothes were reportedly seen around Elvira Barrios' home trying to find information about her son's whereabouts.

Both incidents took place just a few days before the Venezuelan State and the representatives of the family are due to take part in a hearing before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights on 29 June 2005.

Oscar Barrios is yet another member of the family to be a victim of a gun attack since they reported the death of Narciso Barrios. In September 2004 and January 2005, two other members of the Barrios family,

Luis and Rigoberto, were also was also shot dead, allegedly by police officers. Amnesty International is aware that investigations have been opened into the murders of Narciso, Luis and Rigoberto, and into complaints made by the family regarding death threats and intimidation, but the organization is unaware of any progress in those investigations.

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

- calling for a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the armed attack against Oscar Barrios, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- reiterating your concern for the safety of other members of the Barrios family, who have been continually threatened and harassed by Aragua state police officers;
- urging the authorities to act immediately to provide adequate protection measures to the Barrios family to guarantee their safety, in accordance with their wishes, and to dismiss the police officers implicated in the threats and killings, as requested by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights;
- asking what progress has been made in the investigations into the murders of Narciso Barrios, Luis Barrios, and Rigoberto Barrios as well as into incidents of intimidation and threats reported by the family.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Interior and Justice

Ministro de Interior y Justicia, Sr. Jesse Chacón
Ministerio del Interior y Justicia
Avenida Urdaneta Esquina de Platanal
Edificio Interior y Justicia Despacho del Ministro, Piso 3
Caracas, VENEZUELA

Fax: + 58 212 506 1557 /1507

Salutation: Estimado Señor Ministro/Dear Minister

Attorney General

Fiscal General de la República, Dr. Isaías Rodríguez
Avenida Universidad, Esquina Pele el ojo a Misericordia,
frente a Parque Carabobo, Caracas, VENEZUELA

Fax: + 58 212 576 44 19

Salutation: Estimado Señor Fiscal General/Dear Attorney General

Governor of Aragua State

Sr. Gobernador del Estado de Aragua
Sr. Didalco Bolívar
Palacio de Gobierno
Avenida de Miranda
Maracay
Estado de Aragua, VENEZUELA

Fax: + 58 243 2378843

Salutation: Estimado Señor Gobernador/Dear Governor

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Organization

Comisión de Derechos Humanos de Justicia y Paz del Estado Aragua
Calle Negro Primero, Oeste
N 98, frente al
Liceo 'Valentin Espinal', Cruce con Av. Ayacucho, Maracay
Estado Aragua, VENEZUELA

Fax: + 58 243 2336363 (if voice answers, say 'tono de fax, por favour')

and to diplomatic representatives of Venezuela accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 2 August 2005.