

URGENT ACTION

TORTURE VICTIM RELEASED AFTER THREE YEARS

Bus driver and father of four Adrián Vásquez Lagunes was released from prison on 2 December near Tijuana, Mexico, more than three years after he was arrested and tortured by state police and accused of being a high-level drug trafficker. Amnesty International has campaigned for his release as part of the global Stop Torture Campaign.

Thirty-three-year-old **Adrián Vásquez** was released unconditionally from prison near Tijuana, Baja California state, in the early hours of 2 December, after a state judge allowed an appeal by Adrián Vásquez's lawyers and ruled that there was no evidence against him.

State police arrested Adrián Vásquez while driving in Tijuana on 26 September 2012. They threatened, beat and nearly asphyxiated him during a 12-hour period in their custody. The police forced water up his nose so it filled his lungs. Neighbours saw Adrián Vásquez being beaten when police took him to his home to conduct a search. The police then presented him to the media and told them he was a notorious drug trafficker. The officers handed him over to prosecutors and alleged that they had stopped him for speeding in a stolen vehicle and that he had then spontaneously identified himself as a drug trafficker. Soon afterwards, he collapsed and was rushed to hospital for life-saving surgery due to the torture he suffered. The Federal Attorney General's Office charged Adrián Vasquez with drug offences and illegal possession of firearms. He remained in jail while his trial was ongoing.

Since his arrest, Adrián Vásquez's lawyer proved that he was not in a stolen vehicle, that his arrest records had irregularities, and that the authorities failed to demonstrate that the weapons and drugs supposedly found on Adrián Vásquez are linked to him. The statements of neighbours were not taken into account and Adrián Vásquez did not confess to being a drug trafficker.

Speaking to Amnesty International after his release, Adrián Vásquez said: "I'm on my way home right now. I only found out a few hours ago that I was going to be freed." He added, "Thank you very much to everyone at Amnesty. I feel very thankful, very happy. You have supported me so much and I send my best to everyone there." Adrián Vásquez's wife, Judith, said that his freedom was "a reward after all of the efforts taken on Adrián's case. This was such a long fight. Now we have a new path to begin". When she found out about her husband's impending release, Judith said that she excitedly tried to keep the news from their four children, so that it would be a surprise for them when he came home. Joining his family at home, Adrián Vásquez will meet his youngest child, still a baby, for the first time.

No further action is requested of the UA Network at this time. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the second update of UA 93/15. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr41/2204/2015/en/

Name: Adrián Vásquez Lagunes

Gender m/f: m

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