

EXTERNAL

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FOLLOW-UP TO MEDICAL CONCERN

(See AMR 18/01/92 - 1 May 1992)

Wilfredo VELA MALDONADO
BOLIVIA

Wilfredo Vela Maldonado is a 20-year-old insulin-dependent diabetic who, since his imprisonment, has experienced considerable difficulty in controlling his diabetes. He was arrested and imprisoned in September 1991 and is awaiting trial on charges of having planted explosives in the Cochabamba Parliamentary offices for the *Ejército Guerrillero Tupaj Katari* (EGTK) - an armed opposition group. Since his imprisonment he has required urgent hospitalization on five occasions due to uncontrolled diabetes and has entered coma on more than one occasion. In December 1991 he suffered cardio-respiratory failure after entering a diabetic coma. The governor of San Sebastian prison had at the time initially refused to permit his transfer to hospital despite representations from doctors, and it was only after other prisoners threatened to riot that he was hospitalized. He remained in coma for eight days.

In March 1992 he was again reported to be close to coma, but experienced long delays before hospitalization could be arranged due to the authorities' unwillingness to remove him from prison for treatment because of his membership of the EGTK. In August 1992 Wilfredo Vela was once more hospitalized in a comatose state suffering from ketoacidosis; laboratory tests conducted on admission showed very high levels of ketone bodies in the urine and a blood sugar level of 504mg%. He also had a positive reaction to tests for typhoid infection. A medical report issued at the time recommended that he remain in hospital for a minimum of five days to properly establish the level of insulin required in order to avoid blindness and other diabetic complications, and to bring the typhoid fever under control. Wilfredo Vela has a diabetic cataract and, although ophthalmological consultation was recommended, it is not known whether he was examined by an ophthalmologist or whether he received treatment for his cataract.

The conditions and medical facilities at San Sebastian prison are inadequate to allow the proper control of his diabetes. The five occasions on which he was admitted to hospital with uncontrolled diabetes occurred within the space of a year. It would appear that he is being incorrectly treated and is unable to adequately control his diet and treatment. He is reported to be attended by a generalist doctor who is a fellow prisoner and who lacks the facilities to properly monitor and attend to his needs. On the occasions that he has been admitted to hospital, it has been to a private clinic for which he must pay the costs. It is unclear whether his daily insulin supply is always regularly guaranteed without interruption.

The EGTK is an armed opposition group which claims to act on behalf of groups from among the indigenous Aymara and Quecha population; it is described by the government as a Marxist-Leninist organization falsely exploiting the name of the indigenous population in furtherance of its own aims. Amnesty International recognizes the gravity of the charges

against Wilfredo Vela but, given the history of complications he has suffered while in prison, believes that measures must be taken to provide him with proper medical care.

INTERNAL

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To: Medical professionals
From: Medical Office / Research Department - Americas
Date: 18 January 1993

MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION

Wilfredo VELA MALDONADO

BOLIVIA

Keywords

Theme ill-health/ medical care

Summary

Wilfredo Vela Maldonado is a 20-year-old insulin-dependent diabetic who has been hospitalized urgently on a number of occasions since his imprisonment due to uncontrolled diabetes. He appears to be without adequate medical care in San Sebastian prison where he is held and there is concern that arrangements should be made to allow the proper management of his diabetes. Please see the details attached.

Recommended Actions

Letters are requested from medical professionals to the addresses below:

- raising the case of Wilfredo Vela Maldonado, noting that he is an insulin-dependent diabetic whose diabetes appears to have been incorrectly treated whilst in San Sebastian prison
- expressing concern that he appears to be without access to specialist attention, or indeed without adequate medical attention in prison; seeking information on what practical steps have been taken to ensure that Wilfredo Vela receives appropriate and regular medical attention and on how his insulin and dietary needs are monitored
- noting that juvenile-onset diabetes requires careful management, and urging that adequate provision is made to ensure the proper monitoring and control of his diabetes in order to avoid the crises he has experienced and other further complications

Addresses

Sr Ministro del Interior,
Migración y Justicia
Sr Carlos Saavedra Bruno
Ministerio del Interior
La Paz, Bolivia
(Minister of the Interior,
Migration and Justice)

Coronel Abelino Alcaráz
Gobernador
Cárcel "San Sebastian"
Plaza San Sebastián
Calle Ladislao Cabrera esq. Hamiraya
Cochabamba, Bolivia
(Governor of San Sebastian prison)

Copies to:

Asamblea Permanente de los
Derechos Humanos
Casilla 2383
Cochabamba
Bolivia
(Non-governmental human rights
organization)

Colegio Médico de Cochabamba
Colombia 511
entre Ayacucho y Baptista
Cochabamba
Bolivia
(Cochabamba Medical Association)