

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear for Safety

21 July 1995

BOLIVIA Evo Morales, union leader,
Nestor Bravo, union official
Flores Vargas Victor, union leader,
Marca Lamas Felipe, union leader
and at least 50 other union or community leaders

There are serious fears for the safety of between 50 and 60 union and community leaders who were arrested in the Department of Cochabamba on 14 July 1995. They are reportedly being held incommunicado at unknown remote locations in the country. The exact number of detainees is unclear.

According to Amnesty International's information, the majority of those arrested are local community and union leaders protesting against the forced eradication of coca crops in the Department of Cochabamba. Among those detained are Evo Morales, leader of the *Federación de Trabajadores Campesinos del Trópico* (FTCT), Federation of Tropical Region Peasant Workers, and Nestor Bravo, Public Relations Secretary of the *Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* (CSUTCB), Single Union Confederation of Rural Bolivian Workers. Nestor Bravo was arrested separately in La Paz, also on 14 July 1995.

The arrests took place just three days before the state of siege declared on 18 April 1995 was due to terminate. Subsequently, on 18 July, the Minister of Government, Carlos Sánchez Berzain, announced the extension of the state of siege for another 90 days, giving the security forces powers of arrest without judicial warrant and imposing a curfew.

Amnesty International's concern for the physical safety of those arrested has been heightened by reports indicating that, on 15 July, several people, including a child, received gunshot wounds during confrontations between local coca-growers and members of the *Unidad Móvil de Patrullaje Rural* (UMOPAR), Rural Patrol Mobile Unit, in the Isiboro Secure National Park, Department of Cochabamba. Amnesty International has also received reports of ill-treatment of civilians by members of the state security forces during anti-narcotic operations. However, communication difficulties and the prevailing atmosphere of terror and intimidation have made it difficult to confirm these reports.

Amnesty International has received no information indicating that any of those arrested have been involved in violent activities; the organization considers any person arrested for peaceful protest to be a prisoner of conscience.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This is the second time this year that state security forces have conducted mass arrests of coca-growers peacefully protesting against the forceful eradication of their coca crops. The reported arrests and the extension of the state of siege follow the militarization of the Department of Cochabamba and the beginning of forced eradication of coca crops by state security forces in accordance with agreements between the governments of Bolivia and the United States of America.

Under Bolivia's constitution, the state of siege is an exceptional measure which the executive power may invoke in order to preserve public order. It must be lifted within 90 days, or it will expire *ipso facto*. Article 111 of

the constitution states that those persons who have been subject to restriction under the state of siege, shall be set free after 90 days unless they have been placed under the jurisdiction of competent courts.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express and airmail letters either in Spanish or in your own language:

- urging that the physical safety of all those detained be guaranteed;
- requesting the names and places of detention of all those arrested and seeking clarification of their legal situation;
- urging that if they have been detained solely because of their peaceful protest activities, and in the absence of any charge for a recognizable criminal offence, they be immediately and unconditionally released;
- urging that the detainees be granted access to their families and lawyers, seeking assurances that they are being treated in accordance with international standards.

APPEALS TO:

President

Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente
Lic. Gonzalo Sánchez Lozada
Palacio de Gobierno
La Paz, Bolivia

Faxes: + 591 2 392 606

Telegrams: Presidente Sánchez Lozada, La Paz, Bolivia

Salutation: Su Excelencia / Your Excellency

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Sr. Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto
Dr. Antonio Aranibar Quiroga
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto
La Paz, Bolivia

Faxes: + 591 2 371 155

Telegrams: Ministro Relaciones Exteriores, La Paz, Bolivia

Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister

Minister of Government

(formerly Minister of Interior)
Sr. Ministro de Gobierno
Dr. Carlos Sánchez Berzain
Ministerio de Gobierno
Av. Arce esq Belisario Salinas
La Paz, Bolivia

Faxes: + 591 2 361 649

Telegrams: Ministro de Gobierno, La Paz, Bolivia

Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Human Rights Group

Permanent Assembly for Human Rights
Asamblea Permanente de los Derechos Humanos de Bolivia
Cajon Postal 9282, La Paz, Bolivia.

and to diplomatic representatives of Bolivia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 September 1995.