

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 18/11/95

EXTRA 152/95 Fear of torture / "Disappearance" / Legal concern 27 November 1995

BOLIVIA Quintín VARGAS, Executive Secretary of the United Central Confederation of Coca Leaf Growers (*Secretario Ejecutivo de la Federacion de Centrales Unidas*)

Delfín OLIVERA, leader Coca Leaf Growers' Confederation
Esteban QUISPE, " " "
(*Dirigentes Federacion de Productores de Coca*)

Teodocio ROMERO, Leader San José Peasants' Trade union
(*Dirigente Sindicato de campesinos de San José*)

There is concern for the safety of Quintín Vargas, Delfín Olivera, Esteban Quispe and Teodocio Romero, all recently arrested by members of the *Unidad Móvil de Patrullaje Rural (UMOPAR)*, Mobile Rural Patrol Unit. The first three are being held in the Chimore barracks, but the whereabouts of Teodocio Romero remain unknown.

According to reports, the arrests took place during joint operations by UMOPAR and security forces on 15 and 17 November 1995 in the localities of Shinahota and Entre Ríos, El Chapare region. Scores of peasants, trade union leaders and other civilians were arrested and tear gas bombs were dropped from helicopters to disperse peasants demonstrating in the area. One 13-year-old girl was killed during the reportedly indiscriminate use of firearms and more than 10 people were reportedly wounded, at least two of them seriously. A six-month old boy, Remberto García, died of asphyxiation, allegedly as a result of tear gas fumes.

Lack of official information on names and whereabouts of those detained during the UMOPAR operation has heightened the concern for those still in detention.

The exact number of detainees remains unclear, but during a visit to the Chimoré UMOPAR headquarters by representatives of an Interinstitutional Commission on 17 November, a list of 19 people detained during the UMOPAR operation in Shinahota was provided. Representatives of the Commission were allowed to interview the detainees in the presence of police officers. Most of the detainees denounced having been beaten and ill-treated while in police custody. Reports indicate that most of those detained have since been released.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Bolivian human rights organizations have denounced that during police operations by UMOPAR and joint security forces in the towns of Shinahota and Entre Ríos between 15 and 17 November two children were killed, at least 10 civilians were injured by bullets and around 40 people were arrested. During 1995 Amnesty International has called for investigations into the killing of at least three peasants and allegations of torture and ill-treatment during UMOPAR operations. Amnesty International has urged the authorities to respect the human rights of the civilian population in El Chapare region during police operations conducted to enforce eradication of coca crops in accordance with agreements between the governments of Bolivia and the United States of America.

The apparent lack of independent and thorough investigations by the authorities into these alleged human rights violations heightens Amnesty International's concern for the physical safety of those named above.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in SPANISH or your own language:

- expressing concern at reports of human rights violations against the civilian population of Shinahota and Entre Ríos during police operations between the 15 and 17 November;
- seeking clarification of the legal situation of Quintín Vargas, Delfín Olivera, Esteban Quispe, Teodocio Romero, and calling for the whereabouts of the latter to be made known;
- seeking assurances that they are being treated in accordance with international standards for detention, and expressing concern at reports of the ill-treatment of others detained during the police operations;
- calling for an independent and thorough investigation into the deaths of two children and the wounding of more than 10 civilians in Shinahota and Entre Ríos, and for those responsible to be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

President

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

Faxes: +591 239 1216 (if voice, ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

Telegrams: President Sánchez de Lozada, La Paz, Bolivia

Salutation: Su Excelencia / Your Excellency

Minister of Government

Sr. Ministro de Gobierno
Dr. Carlos Sánchez Berzaín
Av. Arce Esq. Belisario Salinas
La Paz, Bolivia

Faxes: +591 239 2606

Telegrams: Ministro de Gobierno, La Paz, Bolivia

Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister

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: + 591 237 1155

Telegrams: Ministro Relaciones Exteriores, La Paz, Bolivia

Salutation: Señor Ministro/Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Human Rights organizations

Asamblea Permanente de Derechos Humanos
Casilla 5697, Cochabamba, Bolivia

Defensa del Niño Internacional (DNI)
Casilla 255, Cochabamba, Bolivia

Red Andina de Información
Casilla 4817, Cochabamba, 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 29 December 1995.