

UA 04/99

Fear for Safety

11 January 1999

CHILEMembers of Staff and volunteers of the non-governmental human rights organization *Corporación por los Derechos del Pueblo* (CODEPU), Committee for the Defence of the Rights of the People)

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of members of the human rights organization *Corporación por los Derechos del Pueblo* (CODEPU), Committee for the Defence of the Rights of the People, who have been subjected to death threats. In mid-December 1998, graffiti was written on the walls of CODEPU's headquarters in Santiago accusing those working in the organization of being communists and traitors. Amnesty International believes the incidents are related to the judicial proceedings currently being conducted in London, UK against former General Augusto Pinochet.

On 27 December, CODEPU members received a threatening message through their electronic mail system. It was sent from the *Frente Nacionalista Patria y Libertad* (Country and Freedom National Front), a right-wing extremist group that used to operate during the early years of military government. The message stated that: "people like us are not going to allow communist/socialists like yourselves to get away with it. Be careful because your elimination is near" ("*gente como nosotros no va a aceptar que comunistas/socialistas como uds. se salgan con la suya, vayan con cuidado que su eliminación esta próxima*").

A criminal complaint (*Querrela Criminal*) about these events was filed before the 12th Criminal Court in Santiago (*12 Juzgado del Crimen de Santiago*) by Fabiola Letelier, Paz Rojas and Victor Espinoza, CODEPU's directors, on 6 January 1999 .

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

CODEPU was founded in 1980 as a response to human rights violations committed during the Pinochet military government (1973-1990). Its work has continued on behalf of victims of past human rights violations and their relatives. Fabiola Letelier, its president, is a lawyer and the sister of Orlando Letelier, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was assassinated in Washington in 1976 by members of the Chilean security forces.

Since the arrest of former General Augusto Pinochet in October 1998, relatives of victims of past human rights violations and human rights lawyers have been subjected to harassment and death threats in Chile. Amongst those reportedly threatened are members of the staff of the University ARCIS, the Christian Democrat Deputy Tomas Jocelyn Holt, and the Socialist Enrique Correa.

Four hooded individuals calling themselves commanders (*comandantes*) of the *Frente Nacionalista Patria y Libertad* made threatening statements towards those seen as attacking former General Pinochet during a press conference given on 10 December 1998. The statements were published in some Chilean newspapers.

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

- expressing concern at the death threats made against staff members of CODEPU;
- asking for an immediate and thorough investigation into the events related to these threats, and that those found responsible be brought to justice;
- asking for reassurances that the Chilean authorities will take all necessary steps to fully protect the physical integrity of staff members of CODEPU.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente de la República de Chile
Señor Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle
Palacio de la Moneda
Santiago, Chile

Fax: +562 694 5080

Telegrams: Sr. Presidente, Santiago, Chile

Salutation: Sr. Presidente / Dear President

Minister of Interior

Sr. Raul Troncoso
Ministerio del Interior
Palacio de la Moneda
Santiago, Chile

Fax: +562 696 8740 - 699 2165

Telegram: Sr. Ministro del Interior

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

Minister of Justice

Sra. Maria Soledad Alvear
Ministra de Justicia
Ministerio de Justicia
Morandé 107
Santiago, Chile

Fax: +562 695 4558

Telegram: Sra. Ministra de Justicia

Salutation: Sra. Ministra / Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Sr, Jose Miguel Inzulza
Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores
Minsiterio de Relaciones Exteriores
Catedral 1158, Piso 3
Santiago, Chile

Fax: +562 696 8796 - 672 6274

Newspaper: La Nación

Agustinas 1269, Santiago, Chile
Fax +00562 698 1059

Human Rights Organization

Codepu

Brown Sur 150 - Nunoa, Santiago, Chile

Fax: +562 341 5041

and to diplomatic representatives of CHILE accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 22 February 1999.