

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/Threats

10 April 2006

ECUADOR

**Manuel Mesías Tatamuez Moreno, President of the *Confederación Ecuatoriana de Organizaciones Clasistas Unitarias de Trabajadores*, (CEDOCUT), Ecuadorean Confederation of Union Workers
Members of his family
Other CEDOCUT members**

Trade unionist, Manuel Mesías Tatamuez Moreno has reportedly been the target of an escalating campaign of threats and intimidation. Amnesty International believes that this may be linked to his work and is concerned for his safety and that of his family and colleagues.

Manuel Mesías Tatamuez Moreno has reportedly received several threatening phone calls on his mobile and home telephone since January 2006. On 14 March, he was followed in the capital Quito by an unregistered van which attempted to force him to stop at a road junction. He managed to escape, but later in the day noticed that he was being followed by a different car. He reported the incident to the Minister of Labour and was given the temporary protection of a guard for four days.

At approximately the same time that Manuel Mesías Tatamuez Moreno was being followed, his niece reportedly received a phone call from a man warning her of the attack. The caller gave a telephone number and his name and asked that Manuel Mesías Tatamuez Moreno phone him back, so he could provide more information.

On 1 April, unknown individuals entered the offices of the Vice President of the Ecuadorean Confederation of Union Workers and reportedly stole important documentation. Manuel Mesías Tatamuez Moreno reported both incidents to the Pichincha Prosecutor on 16 March and 3 April. Amnesty International however is not aware of whether an investigation has been opened into the threats against him or into the robbery.

The latest acts of intimidation against Manuel Mesías Tatamuez Moreno and the Ecuadorean Confederation of Union Workers appear to be linked to their work in salary negotiations between their members, the state and employers. In January, the authorities agreed to increase workers wages by \$30 dollars. The Ministry of Labour however, limited the increase to \$10 dollars which was later criticised by the Unions involved.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the last few years, Amnesty International has received several reports of threats, death threats and other intimidation of human rights defenders, journalists and community leaders, who are critical of the government policies. Amnesty International has called upon the authorities to investigate these threats and bring those responsible to justice, but to date nobody has been charged.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Manuel Mesías Tatamuez Moreno, his family and colleagues;
- expressing concern that they are being threatened and intimidated, apparently in connection with his work in salary negotiations on behalf of his members;

- asking the authorities to order a prompt and effective investigation into the threats, for the findings to be made public and for those responsible to be brought to justice;

- urging the authorities to guarantee the safety of Manuel Mesías Tatamuez Moreno, his family and colleagues according to their wishes.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Felipe Vega de la Cuadra
Ministro de Gobierno, Policía,
Justicia, Cultos y Municipalidades
Ministerio de Gobierno y Policía
Benalcázar y Espejo
Quito, Ecuador

Fax: + 593 2 258 1030 (If someone answers, please ask: "Tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Dear Minister/Señor Ministro

Acting Attorney General

Dra. Cecilia Armas Tobar
Ministra Fiscal Subrogante
Fiscalía General del Estado
Av. Eloy Alfaro N°32-240 y República
Quito, Ecuador

Fax: + 593 2 255 8561 (If someone answers, please ask: "Tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Dear Acting Attorney General/Sra. Ministra Fiscal Subrogante

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Organizations

Comisión Ecuménica de Derechos Humanos (CEDHU)
Carlos Ibarra 176 y 10 de Agosto
Edif. Yuraj Pirca, 9no. piso
Quito, Ecuador

Fax: + 593 2 258 9272 (If someone answers say: 'tono de fax, por favor')

and to diplomatic representatives of Ecuador accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 22 May 2006.