

PUBLIC

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UA 29/01

Fear for safety/arbitrary detention/

legal con

**ECUADOR** Fernando Villavicencio - community leader

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Community leader Fernando Villavicencio was reportedly arrested by the security forces on 31 January in the capital, Quito. It is believed that his arrest was connected to his legitimate involvement in organising demonstrations and protests against the government's economic policy.

Fernando Villavicencio, a member of the *Coordinadora de Movimientos Sociales*, Coordinator of Social Movements, is the third community leader to have been detained in the past 48 hours. Antonio Vargas and Luis Villacís were detained without an arrest warrant on 30 January (see UA 27/01, AMR 28/001/2001, 31 January). They, too, were seemingly detained solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression and association.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Amnesty International has been concerned about torture and ill-treatment in Ecuador for many years. In 2000, methods of torture and ill-treatment reported to have been used by the police included burning detainees and applying electric shocks to their genitals, tongues and chests, as well as beating them and kicking them in the face.

In the past few weeks, trade unions, indigenous groups and grassroots organizations have staged a number of demonstrations in protest at President Gustavo Noboa's economic policies, which include making the US dollar the official currency and implementing an extensive programme of privatization of state-owned enterprises. In January 2000 indigenous groups, trade unions and grassroots organizations staged mass demonstrations and protests against the government's economic policy and forced the then President, Jamil Mahuad Witt, to resign. There is serious concern that the government of President Gustavo Noboa is arresting trade union, indigenous and community leaders to prevent them from organising mass demonstrations. Grassroots organizations, indigenous groups and trade unions are reportedly preparing to stage mass demonstrations on 7 February under the slogan *Acción Nacional contra el Hambre y la Corrupción*, National Action against Hunger and Corruption.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Spanish, English or your own language:**

- expressing concern for the safety of Fernando Villavicencio, who has allegedly been detained solely for exercising his legitimate right to freedom of expression and association;
- urging that he be released immediately, if he is not charged with a recognisably criminal offence.

#### **APPEALS TO:**

President

Dr. Gustavo Noboa Bejarano  
Presidente de la República del Ecuador  
Palacio de Carondelet  
García Moreno 1043  
Quito  
ECUADOR  
**Fax: + 5932 580735**

**Salutation:Dear President / Sr. Presidente**

Minister of the Interior  
Dr. Juan Manrique Martínez  
Ministro de Gobierno y Policía  
Ministerio de Gobierno y Policía  
Benalcázar y Espejo  
Quito  
ECUADOR  
**Fax: + 5932 580067**

**Salutation:Dear Minister / Sr. Ministro**

**COPIES TO:**

Human Rights Organization  
Comisión Ecuménica de Derechos Humanos  
Calle Carlos Ibarra 176 y 10 de Agosto  
Edif. Yuraj Pirca, noveno piso  
Quito  
ECUADOR

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 16 March 2001.