

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 28/004/2004

UA 47/04

Death Threats/Intimidation/Fear for safety

09 February 2004

ECUADOR

Miguel Rivadeneira – Journalist (*Radio Quito* and “*El Comercio*” newspaper)
Marco Pérez Torres – Journalist (*Radio Tarqui*)
Paco Velasco – Journalist (*Radio La Luna*)
Kintto Lucas – Journalist (*IPS and Tintají* magazine)

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of journalists Marco Pérez Torres, Miguel Rivadeneira, Paco Velasco and Kintto Lucas. They have all been subjected to acts of intimidation in the last few months as a result of their criticism of Ecuadorian authorities and the Government of President Lucio Gutiérrez.

Miguel Rivadeneira, director of the news program *Ecuadoradio* at *Radio Quito* was threatened after he reported acts of corruption which appeared to involve members of the armed forces and relatives of President Lucio Gutiérrez. On both 26 and 27 January, he reportedly received several telephone calls from unknown individuals who insulted him and told him to end his criticism of the government. The government has subsequently condemned the threats against Miguel Rivadeneira and stated that it will not tolerate violations of the right to freedom of expression.

Ironically however, the government this month threatened to close down *Radio La Luna* and file charges against Paco Velasco, the director of the news program *La Clave*. This follows his strong criticism of the government following the detention of indigenous leader Humberto Cholango in December 2003 (see UA 36/04, AMR 28/002/2004, 3 February 2004).

Marco Pérez Torres, a news director at *Radio Tarqui*, also reported receiving death threats in September and December 2003 as a result of his critical reporting of the government's policies. On 22 September 2003, an unknown individual called his home and said: “I am calling to express my deep commiserations for the death of the journalist Marco Pérez” (“*Le llamo para darle mi más sentido pésame por la muerte del periodista Marco Pérez*”). On 31 December, another unknown individual reportedly called his home and said: “You will see what will happen to you son of a bitch if you continue criticising the government” (“*Ya vas a ver hijo de puta lo que te va a pasar si sigues hablando en contra del gobierno*”) After five minutes the same person apparently called again and said: “You are going to die son of a bitch, you can be sure, you are going to die” (“*Vas a morir hijo de puta, eso te lo aseguro, vas a morir*”).

Kintto Lucas, IPS correspondent in Ecuador and Editor of *Tintají* news magazine, also received death threats in September 2003. On 20 September, an unknown individual asked members of the staff of at “*El Comercio*” newspaper to publish an obituary in which deep commiserations were expressed to Kintto Lucas's family. The obituary was also to include the names of other journalists and human rights defenders, who are well known for their criticism of the Ecuadorian government and the effects of Plan Colombia, the US military aid program to neighbouring Colombia.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has expressed its deep concern about the continued threat and harassment of those who are critical of the authorities, including human rights defenders, journalists and indigenous community leaders. The organization has urged Ecuadorian authorities on several occasions to send a clear message that such threats will not be tolerated, to ensure that human rights defenders, community leaders and journalists are able to work without fear of intimidation. It has also called upon the authorities to investigate these threats and bring perpetrators to justice. However, no charges have been brought against those responsible.

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

- expressing concern for the death threats against Miguel Rivadeneira, Marco Pérez Torres and Kintto Lucas;
- urging the authorities to do everything in their power to guarantee the safety of all the above;
- calling for an investigation into the threats against Miguel Rivadeneira, Marco Pérez Torres and Kintto Lucas and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- reminding the authorities that the Ecuadorian government has publicly condemned the threats against Miguel Riadeneira and stated that it will not tolerate acts which violate the right to freedom of expression;
- expressing concern for the government's threat to close *Radio La Luna* and file charges against Paco Velasco;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee that the right to freedom of expression is fully respected.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior

Ing. Raúl Baca Carbo
Ministro de Gobierno, Policía,
Justicia, Cultos y Municipalidades
Ministerio de Gobierno y Policía
Benalcázar y Espejo
Quito, Ecuador

Fax: + 593 2 2580 067

Salutation: Dear Minister/Sr. Ministro

Attorney General

Dra. Mariana Yépez de Velasco
Ministra Fiscal General del Estado
Fiscalía General del Estado
Av. Eloy Alfaro N° 32-240 y República
Quito, Ecuador

Fax: + 593 2 2558 561 (if someone replies say "tono de fax por favor")

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Sra. Fiscal

COPIES TO:

Human Rights NGO

Centro de Documentación en Derechos Humanos
"Segundo Montes Mozo SJ@ CSMM
Coordinador: Pablo de la Vega
Nicolás Jiménez, E 4, 223, y Av. 12 de Octubre, piso 5, Of.E- 3
Quito, Ecuador
Casilla: 17-08-8069
Quito, Ecuador

Telefax: + 593 2 2543 845 (if someone replies 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 March 2004.