

UA 93/01

PARAGUAY Jorge HEREBIA
Rafael PEREIRA
Oscar ACUÑA
Jimmy Orlando DOS SANTOS
Diego ACOSTA

Other detainees at Panchito López Juvenile Detention Centre

Five juvenile detainees have reportedly been beaten by prison guards after they told a delegation from Amnesty International USA (AIUSA) that they had been tortured. Four of them were then transferred to adult prisons, and the other was put in an isolation cell.

The five detainees named above, alongside other detainees, were presented to delegates from AIUSA who visited the *Correccional de Menores Panchito López*, Panchito López Juvenile Detention Centre, on 6 April, together with local non-governmental organisations and prison authorities. The following day they were reportedly brought before the other detainees and beaten by a prison guard.

On 10 April the Paraguayan Vice-Minister of Justice made an unannounced visit to the detention centre, and found Diego Acosta handcuffed in the isolation cell, which reportedly measures 1.2 metres square. He ordered the cell to be closed, and Diego was transferred to a more adequate juvenile detention centre. Diego Acosta has reportedly made several suicide attempts.

The head of prison security has reportedly been suspended for ordering that Diego be sent to the isolation cell. Another prison guard has reportedly also been suspended after detainees accused him of torture and ill-treatment prior to the AIUSA visit.

On the day of the Vice-Minister's visit a local branch of an international NGO accused prison guards at Panchito López of torture, abuse of authority and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, in a criminal complaint filed with the *Fiscalía* (Attorney General's office).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The AIUSA delegates, including an expert on juvenile justice issues, had visited Paraguay to raise concerns about the treatment of children in the country's correctional system and in its armed forces. The government had already said they would close Panchito López, and the delegation's main objective was to get them to commit to a date for this.

Amnesty International has repeatedly expressed concern to the Paraguayan authorities about the grossly inadequate conditions at Panchito López, where minors are held in severely overcrowded, insanitary cells with few washing facilities, little access to exercise or fresh air, insufficient food and lack of proper medical care. Nine out of ten are awaiting trial, and have not been convicted of any offence. International organizations including the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) have expressed similar concerns.

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

- expressing concern that a prison guard at the Panchito López Juvenile Detention Centre apparently beat Jorge Herebia, Rafael Pereira, Oscar Acuña and Jimmy Orlando Dos Santos in front of other detainees, as punishment for speaking to AIUSA delegates;
- calling for a full, independent and impartial investigation into these reports;
- expressing concern at reports that Jorge Herebia, Rafael Pereira, Oscar Acuña and Jimmy Orlando Dos Santos have been transferred from *Panchito López* to adult prisons in the interior of Paraguay, apparently in reprisal for speaking to AIUSA delegates;
- calling on the authorities to close the Panchito López Juvenile Detention Centre immediately, and reminding them of their repeated promises to transfer all detainees at the centre to adequate premises which comply with international standards.

APPEALS TO:

President

Exmo. Sr. Presidente de la República del Paraguay
Don Luis Angel Gonzalez Macchi
Palacio de López
El Paraguayo Independiente y Ayolas
Asunción, Paraguay

Telegrams: Presidente, Asunción, Paraguay

Faxes: + 595 21 498 809

Salutation: Sr. Presidente / Dear President

Minister of Justice

Dr Silvio Ferreira Fernández
Ministro de Justicia
Gaspar R. de Francia y EE.UU.
Asunción, Paraguay

Telegrams: Ministro Justicia, Asunción, Paraguay

Faxes: + 595 21 208 469

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Dr Juan Esteban Aguirre
Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores
O'Leary 222 y Pte. Franco
Asunción, Paraguay

Telegrams: Ministro Relaciones Exteriores, Asunción, Paraguay

Faxes: + 595 21 490 676

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Non-governmental Organisation

Defensa de los Niños Internacional-DNI
Casilla de Correo N° 3101
Asunción, Paraguay

and to diplomatic representatives of Paraguay accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 23 May 2001.