

UA 36/92 Torture/Legal Concern

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**VENEZUELA:**

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Luis Enrique ANDRADE, 25  
Lisandro PEREZ HERNÁNDEZ, 33  
Orlando José RAMÍREZ PÁEZ  
Jesús Enrique GONZÁLEZ and  
Mark Flavio ZUCHELLI.

Amnesty International is deeply concerned about reports of torture and ill-treatment by members of the police against the above-mentioned persons, one of them a minor, who were arrested on 23 January in Caracas during recent demonstrations.

The fourteen were arrested, reportedly without warrants, on 23 January by members of the Policía Metropolitana (Metropolitan Police) who raided the campus of the Universidad Central de Venezuela (Venezuela Central University) in Caracas, to disperse a student demonstration against an increase in transport fares. The detainees, most of whom are students, were transferred to the Metropolitan Police headquarters in San José Cotiza, a Caracas suburb, where they were allegedly tortured. The torture consisted of beatings with clubs, kicks and electric shocks, as well as threats. According to reports, several of the victims presented bruises and other injuries consistent with their allegations.

Mark Flavio Zucchelli was reportedly beaten after his detention on 23 January in the university campus by members of the Metropolitan Police, handcuffed and tortured with electric shocks during his transferral to the Cotiza police station. He was released the same day free of charge, allegedly after he presented proof of his US citizenship.

On 23 January all the detainees except Mark Flavio Zucchelli were transferred to the headquarters of the Policía Técnica Judicial, Criminal Investigations Police, in Caracas. On 26 January they were charged with lesiones personales a funcionarios policiales y alteración del orden público (injuring police agents and disturbing public order) and transferred pending trial to Internado Judicial de "El Junquito", a detention centre in Caracas.

On 26 January the detainees began a hunger strike in demand of their unconditional release. On 27 January, lawyers of the Programa Venezolano de Educación-Acción en Derechos Humanos (PROVEA), a human rights organization, presented a petition of amparo to the corresponding Criminal Court, demanding that the charges against the detainees be dropped. The request, which was reportedly based on witnesses' testimonies supporting the alleged innocence of the students, has not been responded to at the time of writing.

Amnesty International is also concerned about reports of harrassment and intimidation against student leaders. On 27 January the homes of Leonardo Molina, president of the student's centre of the Pedagógico - a college - in Caracas, and of Henry Benítez, president of the student's centre of the Pedagógico in Barquisimeto, were raided in the early morning hours, reportedly without search warrants, by members of the Dirección de los Servicios de Inteligencia y Prevención (DISIP), Security Police. The police officers, who failed to locate the students, allegedly told their relatives that they would continue to search for them, without giving any reasons for their action.

**Background Information:**

Amnesty International is seriously concerned about an increasing number of reports of torture, ill-treatment and other gross human rights violations by members of the police in Venezuela, particularly in the context of actions to curb anti-government demonstrations. Economic measures introduced by the government in mid-October 1991, including rises in fuel prices and transport fares, triggered widespread protests, some of which were violent. At least six people, five of them students, were shot by members of the security forces in October and November 1991 during demonstrations. As in previous years during widespread social unrest, the security forces illegally arrested student and political leaders and held them in short-term detention. For example, in November members of the DISIP arrested at least 35 student and political activists, who were detained at their homes without arrest warrants and held them for a few hours before releasing them without charge. In October 1991 at least seven people arrested during raids in the barrios, poor urban neighbourhoods, suffered torture and ill-treatment while in detention in the Metropolitan Police headquarters in San José Cotiza. The detainees, who were released at the end of that month reportedly suffered

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beatings with clubs, kicks, burning with cigarettes and electric shocks. Despite complaints presented to the authorities, those responsible have remained at large. Torture is strictly forbidden in Venezuela, which in 1991 ratified both the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Inter-American Convention to Prevent and Punish Torture.

In February and March 1989 several hundred people died in Venezuela and hundreds suffered torture and ill-treatment during short-term detention, after the government suspended a wide range of constitutional guarantees in response to widespread protests. Although many died in the context of widespread violence and disorder, a number of people were the victims of deliberate gross human rights violations, particularly torture, by the police and military personnel.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/express and airmail letters, preferably in Spanish:**

- expressing serious concern at reports of torture against 14 people, including a minor, arrested by members of the Metropolitan Police on 23 January in Caracas;
- urging full investigations into the reports of torture, that those responsible be brought to justice and that adequate reparatory measures be provided to the victims;
- welcoming the release of Mark Flavio Zucchelli, but expressing concern about the imprisonment of the remaining 13 detainees and urging full investigations into the reports that the charges brought against them are unfounded.

**APPEALS TO:**

President:

Sr. Carlos Andrés Pérez  
Presidente de la República  
Palacio Miraflores, Caracas, Venezuela

**Telegrams: Presidente Pérez, Caracas, Venezuela**

**Telex: 26429 EXTER VC**

**Salutation: Sr Presidente / Dear President**

Minister of the Interior:

Sr. Alejandro Izaguirre Angeli

Ministro del Interior  
Palacio Miraflores, Caracas, Venezuela  
**Telegrams: Ministro Interior, Caracas, Venezuela**

**Telex: 26429 EXTER VC**

**Salutation: Sr Ministro / Dear Minister**

Attorney General:

Sr. Ramón Escobar Salom  
Fiscal General de la República  
La Candelaria, Caracas, Venezuela  
**Telegrams: Fiscal General, Caracas,  
Venezuela**  
**Telex: 24787 FISGE VC**  
**Salutation: Sr Fiscal General**

**COPIES TO:**

Human Rights Organization:

Sres, Provea  
Apartado Postal 5156  
Caracas Venezuela

Students' Federation:

Sres., Federación de Centros Universitarios  
Ciudad Universitaria, Los Chaguaramos  
Caracas, Venezuela

Daily Newspaper:

Sres., El Diario de Caracas  
Final Av Principal  
Boleíta Norte, Caracas, Venezuela

and to diplomatic representatives of Venezuela in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 13 March 1992.