

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Ill-treatment / Prisoner of conscience 14 September 1994

VENEZUELA

Gabriel RIVAS GRANADILLO, peasant activist

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Gabriel Rivas Granadillo is being held in a police station annexe in conditions that amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Amnesty International is concerned for his well-being, and fears that he may at any time be sent to the remote penal colony of *El Dorado* where conditions are known to be even worse than those he is now facing. Amnesty International believes that Gabriel Rivas is a prisoner of conscience arrested for his peaceful activities on behalf of peasants involved in a land dispute.

Gabriel Rivas is being held in the police station annexe in the town of Valencia, state of Carabobo. Conditions there are known to be extremely poor. According to reports, prisoners are frequently beaten by the warders. There is severe overcrowding, inadequate sanitary facilities, lack of medical care and the food is of such poor quality that prisoners have to rely on relatives bringing in provisions.

According to information recently received by Amnesty International, Gabriel Rivas, leader of *La Chivera* peasant's union, was arrested without a warrant on 2 July 1994 by members of the state police in Valencia, state of Carabobo.

His unlawful arrest is connected to his activism on behalf of a group of peasants contesting ownership of a sector of land known as Mount Vernont in Valencia.

Gabriel Rivas was subsequently sentenced to one year's administrative detention under the Law of Vagrants and Crooks (*Ley de Vagos y Maleantes*). This law permits administrative detention for periods of up to five years without judicial appeal or review, of people deemed by the police to be a danger to society, but against whom there is no evidence of punishable crimes. While this law is generally used against the poorest sectors of society, it has also been used against political dissidents and community activists, as it is now being used against Gabriel Rivas. Both the letter and the application of the law violate international human rights standards and Amnesty International has repeatedly called on the Venezuelan authorities to suspend its use with a view to its abolition.

The majority of people detained under the law are sent to the remote jungle colony of *El Dorado* where conditions are known to be appalling. Its extreme isolation means that inmates have no access to independent monitoring, or legal or medical remedies of any kind.

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

- expressing concern that the conditions under which Gabriel Rivas is being held reportedly amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment;
- stating that Amnesty International believes Gabriel Rivas to be a prisoner of conscience and calling for his immediate and unconditional release;
- calling for the immediate abolition of the Law of Vagrants and Crooks, which infringes international human rights standards including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

**APPEALS TO**

1) President of the Republic

Doctor Rafael Caldera  
 Presidente de la República de Venezuela  
 Palacio de Miraflores  
 Caracas, Venezuela

**Telegrams: Presidente Caldera, Caracas, Venezuela**

**Telexes: 21161 miraf vc**

**Faxes: (+58 2) 838239**

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

2) Minister of Justice

Doctor Ruben Creixems Savignon  
 Ministro de Justicia  
 Ministerio de Justicia  
 Torre Norte, piso 25  
 Centro Simón Bolívar  
 Caracas, Venezuela

**Telegrams: Ministro Interior, Caracas, Venezuela**

**Telexes: 21935 minju vc**

**Faxes: (+ 58 2) 483 7515**

**Salutation: Sr Ministro/ Dear Minister**

3) Governor of the state of Carabobo

Señor Henrique Salas Romer  
 Gobernador del Estado de Carabobo  
 Palacio de Gobierno  
 Valencia, Carabobo

**Telegrams: Gobernador Salas Romer, Valencia, Venezuela**

**Salutation: Sr Gobernador/ Dear Governor**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**Attorney General of the Republic

Dr Iván Darío Badell González  
 Fiscal General de la República  
 Fiscalía General de la República  
 Manduca a Ferrenquín  
 La Candelaria  
 Caracas 1010-A, Venezuela

Human Rights organization

Sres. CODDECIUC  
 Comisión de Defensa de los Derechos Ciudadanos de la Universidad de Carabobo  
 Facultad de Derecho, UC  
 Boul. del Teatro Municipal  
 entre c/ Colombia y Libertad  
 Valencia, Edo Carabobo, Venezuela

Human Rights Organization

Sres.  
 Provea  
 Apartado Postal 5156  
 Caracas, Venezuela

and to diplomatic representatives of Venezuela accredited to your country

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 26 October 1994.