

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 53/012/2003

UA 260/03

Death Threat / fear for safety

03 September 2003

VENEZUELA **Linmai Basave (m), human rights defender**
Yelitza Moreno (f)
Her son (m), one and a half years old

killed: **Joe Luis Castillo González (m), human rights defender**

Amnesty International is deeply concerned for the safety of Linmai Basave, a staff member from the *Oficina de Acción Social de Vicariato Apostólico de Machiques*, Office of Social Action of the Episcopal Vicariate in Machiques. There are also serious concerns for Yelitza Moreno and her baby son, following the killing of her husband, Joe Luis Castillo González on 27 August.

On the evening of 27 August, Joe Luis Castillo González, until recently the coordinator of the Office of Social Action of the Episcopal Vicariate, was shot nine times by two unidentified individuals riding a motorbike in the town of Machiques in the North Western frontier state of Zulia. At the time, he was driving home with his wife, Yelitza Moreno and their baby son, who are both in serious, but stable conditions in hospital.

Five days after the assassination, on 1 September, the Office of the Episcopal Vicariate received an anonymous telephone call in which the caller asked to speak to Linmai Basave, the refugee project coordinator. The administrator was told to tell him "*que se cuidara porque no iba a quedar aquí*", (he should watch out as it's not stopping here), apparently in reference to the killing of Joe Luis Castillo González.

The *Ministerio Público*, Public Prosecutor's Office has assigned a *fiscal auxiliar*, an assistant prosecutor to the case, despite requests that a *fiscal especial*, special prosecutor, be assigned, due to the severity of the case. The Office of the Episcopal Vicariate and other Venezuelan human rights organisations have questioned the effectiveness of the investigations carried out thus far. At present, Yelitza Moreno and her son are receiving police protection.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Joe Luis Castillo González carried out a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) programme in Machiques de Perijá, in the North Western frontier state of Zulia, assisting Colombian refugees who had fled the escalating violence in Colombia. Reports of Colombian paramilitary and armed opposition groups operating inside Venezuela's border have heightened tension in the area. In recent years, large scale army backed paramilitary operations in the north-eastern regions of Colombia have resulted in the displacement of tens of thousands of civilians, many of whom have fled to Venezuela. In this context, human rights defenders working with displaced communities have frequently been accused and threatened by the Colombian military and paramilitaries of being guerrilla collaborators.

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

- expressing serious concern over the killing of Joe Luis Castillo González and for the safety of Linmai Basave, Yelitza Moreno and her one and a half year old son;
- urging the authorities to take all the necessary measures to ensure their safety, and that of staff of the *Oficina de Acción Social de Vicariato Apostólico de Machiques*, Office of Social Action of the Episcopal Vicariate of Machiques;
- calling on the authorities to assign the necessary resources to carry out a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the killing of Joe Luis Castillo González and the intimidation experienced by staff of the *Oficina de Acción Social de Vicariato Apostólico de Machiques*, Office of Social Action of the Episcopal Vicariate of Machiques, to make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;

APPEALS TO:President

Sr. Hugo Chávez Frías

Presidente de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela

Palacio de Miraflores

Esquina de Bolero, Av. Urdaneta, Caracas, Venezuela

Telegram: Presidente de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, Caracas, Venezuela

Fax: + 58 212 806 3533 /806 3221(please keep trying)

Salutation: Señor Presidente / Dear President

Attorney General

Dr. Isaías Rodríguez

Fiscal General de la República. Avenida Universidad

Esquina Pele el ojo a Misericordia

Frente a Parque Carabobo, Caracas, Venezuela

Telegram: Fiscal General de la República, Caracas, Venezuela

Fax: + 58 212 576 4419

Salutation: Estimado Dr Rodríguez/ Dear Dr Rodríguez

Interior Minister

General Lucas Rincón Romero

Ministro del Interior y Justicia

Avenida Urdaneta Esquina de Platanal

Edificio Interior y Justicia

Despacho del Ministro, piso 3

Caracas, Venezuela

Telegram: Ministro del Interior y Justicia, Caracas, Venezuela

Fax: + 58 212 506 1557

Salutation: Señor Ministro/Dear Minister

Human Rights Ombudsman

Dr. Germán Mundaraín

Defensoría del Pueblo

Bellas Artes comienzo Avenida México frente al Ateneo de Caracas

Plaza Morelos, Caracas, Venezuela.

Telegram: Defensoría del Pueblo, Caracas, Venezuela

Fax: + 58 212 575 4467

Salutation: Estimado Dr Mundaraín/ Dear Dr Mundaraín

Local Governor

Manuel Rosales

Gobernador del Estado Zulia

Palacio de Gobierno, Calle 95

Maracaibo, Zulia, Venezuela

Telegram: Gobernación del Estado Zulia,

Fax: +58 261725 10 87

Salutation: Estimado Gobernador/Dear Governor

COPIES TO:Local newspaper

La Verdad

Fax: +58 261 798 5523

Human Rights organisation

Oficina de Acción Social

del Vicariato Apostólico de

Machiques

Calle Sucre, entre Santa Teresa y Artes, frente a la Plaza Bolívar,
Machiques

Telefax: +58 263 473 2806 (if a voice answers, say “tono por favour”)

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 15 October 2003.