

APRIL 1999 WORLDWIDE APPEALS

****FINAL TEXT****

COLOMBIA – EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTION / FEARS FOR SAFETY

Four human rights workers were abducted from the offices of the Popular Training Institute (IPC) in Medellín, Antioquia Department, on 28 January 1999. On 1 February the head of the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia, a paramilitary organization, claimed that they were holding the four “as prisoners of war”. The armed forces and their paramilitary allies have frequently labelled human rights defenders as guerrilla auxiliaries and supporters in an attempt to present them as legitimate targets in the counter-insurgency war. All four IPC workers were released towards the end of February, after national and international outcry on their behalf.

Also in January 1999 Everardo de Jesús Puertas and Julio Ernesto González, who worked for the Committee of Solidarity with Political Prisoners (CSPP), were shot dead by gunmen in Dorodál, Antioquia Department. In February the CSPP and Intercongregational Commission of Justice and Peace announced the closure of offices in protest at the lack of security for human rights defenders.

AI is concerned that, despite its promises, the Colombian government has still to take effective measures to guarantee the safety of human rights defenders, including decisive action to dismantle paramilitary groups.

Please write, expressing your concern that the recent abductions and killings demonstrate that the government has yet to take effective measures to protect human rights defenders, and asking for improved protection in line with UN recommendations. Send your letters to: Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana, Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No. 7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia. (Faxes: 57 1 284 2186). Write to your own government raising the concerns outlined above.

PHILIPPINES – DEATH PENALTY

Dante Piandong, Jesus Morallos and Archie Bulan have spent the past four years in prison facing execution, after they were sentenced to death for shooting a policeman. All three claim that they are innocent and that they were tortured by police.

Dante Piandong was arrested in December 1994 and taken into police custody where he claims he was beaten and given electric shocks to his genitals. When he asked to see a lawyer, his interrogators continued to beat him. He also claims that he was handcuffed and forced to lie flat on a bench with his face covered by a towel, which was then doused with water.

During their trial, Dante Piandong, Jesus Morallos and Archie Bulan testified that they had been tortured and ill-treated by the police. However, the trial judge only mentioned this in passing when he convicted the three men and sentenced them to death. When the Supreme Court reviewed their cases and confirmed their sentences, no reference was made to the alleged ill-treatment or torture.

More than 900 people have been sentenced to death in the Philippines since the reintroduction of the death penalty in 1993. In January 1999 the first execution took place, ending a 23-year de facto moratorium on executions, and sparking fears that the authorities intend to carry out the remaining sentences.

Please write, calling for the death sentences imposed on Dante Piandong, Jesus Morallos and Archie Bulan to be commuted and asking for a prompt and impartial investigation into the men's allegations of torture. Send your letters to: President Joseph Estrada, Malacañang Palace, Manila, Philippines. (Faxes: 632 833 7793). E-mails: erap@erap.com

RUSSIAN FEDERATION – PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE / HEALTH CONCERN

Grigory Pasko, a naval officer and journalist, faces up to 20 years' imprisonment on charges of "espionage" and "revealing state secrets".

In 1993 Grigory Pasko filmed a Russian navy tanker illegally dumping liquid and solid nuclear waste in waters off the Russian coast. The authorities claim that sensitive military secrets were disclosed by the film, which was broadcast on television in eastern Russia and Japan, and related newspaper articles.

Grigory Pasko was arrested by agents of the Federal Security Service (FSB) in 1997 and taken to a pre-trial detention centre in Vladivostok. He has spent more than six months in solitary confinement. His health has deteriorated and he has reportedly been denied adequate medical care.

His trial began in Vladivostok on 21 January 1999 in a closed military court. The authorities have classified the case as a state secret, making it difficult for his lawyers to mount a proper defence. Two of the lay judges hearing the case are reportedly officers of the coastal guard, under the command of the FSB, casting doubt on the independence of the court.

AI considers Grigory Pasko a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for exercising his right to peaceful freedom of expression, and believes that his prolonged solitary confinement constitutes cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Please write, calling for Grigory Pasko's immediate and unconditional release, but pending this urge the authorities to ensure that he receives adequate medical attention. Send your letters to: Boris Yeltsin, President of the Russian Federation, Rossiyskaya Federatsiya, g. Moskva, Kreml, Prezidentu Rossiyskoy Federatsii Yeltsinu B.N, Russian Federation (faxes: 7095 206 51 73) and to the Russian Federation ambassador in your country.