

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 28/007/2003

09 May 2003

UA 126/03 Fear for Safety/death threats

ECUADOR **Teresa Gladys Pita Bravo (f), mother of Elías Elint López Pita
Teresa Lourdes López Pita (f), her daughter
Arturo Patricio Lasso (m), her son-in-law, and their family**

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Teresa Gladys Pita Bravo, her daughter Teresa Lourdes López Pita and son-in-law Arturo Patricio Lasso, and their family. Teresa Gladys Pita Bravo has received several anonymous death threats. Her son "disappeared" in November 2000 and eight police officers have been convicted of his abduction.

On 26 April, Teresa Gladys Pita Bravo received three anonymous telephone calls in which she was told that if the police officers who have been charged with her son's abduction get a longer sentence, the caller knew where she and her family lived, and would "finish with all of [them] one by one" ("*si en la sentencia de Segunda Instancia les subieran las penas a los acusados, que ya nos tienen ubicados y que terminaran con nosotros uno a uno*").

Teresa Gladys Pita Bravo's son, Elías Elint López Pita, "disappeared" after being detained by police in the town of Ambato, Tungurahua province. In February 2002, eight police officers were sentenced to between three and six years' imprisonment for his abduction. Five of the officers were released in December 2002. On 28 April 2003, two days after Teresa Gladys Pita Bravo was threatened, three of the eight police officers were also sentenced to prison terms of between eight and 16 years in connection with the "disappearance" of Luis Alberto Shinin Laso, a key witness in Elías Elint López Pita's case. Those that were released in December 2002 remain at large.

Since Elías Elint López Pita "disappeared" in November 2000, his family has campaigned vigorously to find the truth about his "disappearance" and to bring to justice those responsible. In 2001, Teresa Gladys Pita Bravo and the family's lawyer, Gino Cevallos González, received several anonymous death threats (see UA 197/01, AMR 28/020/2001, 2 August 2001).

In December 2001 the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ordered the Ecuadorean government to provide protection to the family of Elías Elint López Pita. However, the family claim that the protection measures ceased in January 2003, when the new government took office.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 6 November 2000, Elías Elint López Pita, from the town of Ambato, Tungurahua Province, was arrested at the Panamericana Norte police check point of Ambato, while travelling from Ambato to Esmeraldas Province. He has not been seen since.

On 7 November 2000, the prosecutor investigating his "disappearance" heard the testimony of Luis Alberto Shinin Laso, who was in police custody at Ambato police station at the time. Luis Alberto Shinin Laso claimed that he met Elías Elint López Pita when he was brought to the police station, and that Elías Elint López Pita told him that he was being held on suspicion of robbery and that he had been beaten by police officers. Luis Alberto Shinin Laso was later released but, on 14 November 2000, was reportedly abducted by unidentified gunmen and taken by car to the outskirts of Ambato, where he was shot and thrown over a cliff. He survived this attack but on 17 November 2000, according to hospital staff, at least six armed men in balaclavas burst into the hospital where he was being treated and abducted him. His current whereabouts remain unknown.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Teresa Gladys Pita Bravo, her daughter Teresa Lourdes López Pita, her son-in-law Arturo Patricio Lasso and their family;
- urging the authorities to do everything necessary to guarantee their safety, in accordance with the wishes of the family themselves;
- calling on the authorities to order a prompt and effective investigation into the threats made against Teresa Gladys Pita Bravo, with the results made public and those responsible to be brought to justice;
- calling for a prompt, full, effective and impartial investigation into the "disappearance" of Luis Alberto Shinin Laso.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior and Police

Dr. Mario Canessa

Ministerio de Gobierno y Policía

Benalcázar y Espejo

Quito, Ecuador

Telegram: Ministerio de Gobierno, Quito, Ecuador

E-mail: gicela.abac@mingobierno.org.ec

Fax: + 593 2 580 067 (it may be difficult to get through; please keep trying)

Salutation: Señor Ministro/ Dear Minister

Attorney General

Dra. Mariana Yépez de Velasco

Ministra Fiscal General del Estado

Av. Eloy Alfaro N32 240 y República

Quito, Ecuador

Telegram: Ministra Fiscal General del Estado, Quito, Ecuador

Fax: + 593 2 2559 447 (if someone answers, please ask for the fax: "El tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Señora Fiscal General/Dear Attorney General

Head of the National Police

Gral. Edgar Vaca Vinueza

Comandante General de la Policía Nacional

Ramírez Dávalos 612 y Av. 10 de Agosto

Quito, Ecuador

Telegram: Comandante General Policía Nacional, Quito, Ecuador

Fax: + 593 2 506 066 (it may be difficult to get through; please keep trying)

Salutation: Señor Inspector General/Dear Chief Inspector

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Organization

Comisión Ecuménica de Derechos Humanos

Carlos Ibarra 176 y 10 de Agosto

Edificio Yuraj Pirca, Piso 9

Quito, Ecuador

and to diplomatic representatives of Ecuador accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 20 June 2003.