

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 28/022/2001

UA 224/01 Fear for safety

7 September 2001

**ECUADOR Luis Villacís Maldonado (m), trade unionist, community leader  
His family**

---

Three teargas bombs were thrown into the house of community leader Luis Villacís Maldonado on the night of 1 September, after he announced that he was organising an anti-government demonstration. He was at home with his family at the time, and Amnesty International believes they are all in grave danger.

Luis Villacís is the President of the *Frente Popular* (Popular Front), a coalition of trade unions and grassroots organizations. He had earlier announced publicly that he was organizing a two-day demonstration against government economic policy for 11 and 12 September.

He had been arrested without a warrant in January this year, reportedly as a reprisal for his legitimate role in organizing demonstrations and protests against the government's economic policy. He was released on the orders of a judge the following day. (See UA 27/01, AMR 28/001/2001, 31 January, and follow-up, AMR 28/003/2001, 2 February).

The attack on Luis Villacís appears to be part of a pattern of intimidation and threats against human rights organizations, civil society leaders and critics of the government, which emerged in July when a group called *Legión Blanca* started an e-mail campaign of intimidation and threats against human rights organizations, journalists and civil society leaders (see UA 189/01, AMR 28/017/2001, 26 July, and follow-up, AMR 28/018/01, 2 August). The first e-mail sent by the group named Luis Villacís and accused him and other trade unionists and members of left-wing political parties of being "criminals" and serving Cuban interests.

If the Ecuadorian authorities are serious about protecting human rights in the country they must take swift action to bring those behind the 1 September attack to justice.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Luis Villacís Maldonado and his family;
- asking the authorities to do everything necessary to protect them, so he can continue his legitimate activities in safety;
- asking the authorities to order a prompt and effective investigation into the 1 September teargas attack, with the findings made public and those responsible brought to justice.

**APPEALS TO: Please note that it can be difficult getting through to fax numbers in Ecuador. Please be patient and keep trying. If a voice answers, ask "Por favor, me puede dar tono de fax."**

Minister of the Interior and Police

Dr. Juan Manrique Martínez  
Ministerio de Gobierno y Policía  
Benalcázar y Espejo  
Quito  
ECUADOR

**Fax: + 593 2 580 067**

**Telegram: Ministerio de Gobierno, Quito, Ecuador**

**Salutation: Señor Ministro/Dear Minister**

Congressional Human Rights Commission  
Dr. Bolívar Sánchez Ribadeneira  
Presidente de la Comisión Especializada  
Permanente de Derechos Humanos  
del H. Congreso Nacional  
Luis Saá y Sodiro  
Edificación Daniel Cadena, 1° Piso, oficina 108  
Quito  
Ecuador  
**Fax: + 593 2 504 295**

**Salutation: Señor Presidente**

**COPIES TO:**

Human Rights Organization  
Centro de Documentación en Derechos Humanos  
"Segundo Montes Mozo S.J."  
Av. 10 e Agosto N26-57 y Gral Vicente Aguirre  
Edif. Tauro, Of. 802  
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 19 October 2001.