

**ECUADOR Julio Edison Román Muñoz - professional athlete**

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Police have threatened to kill Julio Edison Román Muñoz, after he filed a complaint against officers who beat and threatened him. Amnesty International is concerned for his safety.

Three police officers reportedly arrested him and another man on 28 February in the capital, Quito, and accused them of carrying drugs. While they were being taken in a van to the police station in Atahualpa district, officers kicked Julio Edison Román, hit him with handcuffs and told him to confess to the offence. At the police station officers hit him with metal objects, kicked and elbowed him in the face and stamped on his feet. The officers threatened to kill him and demanded money to drop the drugs charges.

Julio Edison Román filed a formal complaint with the police authorities and named two of the police officers who tortured him.

After the judicial proceedings against the police officers started at a police court in Quito, police arrested Julio Edison Román again on 3 April, claiming they were acting on a complaint from a neighbour. At the police station one of the two officers he had named threatened him for pressing charges, apparently telling the other policemen, "This is the one who accused us at the trial...This is our opportunity to destroy him". ("*Este es el del juicio...Esta es nuestra oportunidad de hundirle*"). Julio Edison Román was later transferred to the Narcotics Office (*Oficina de Antinarcóticos*) in Pichincha Province, where another officer threatened to kill him for "having started a trial against the police" ("*por tener un juicio contra la policía*"). He was later released without charge.

The police officers Julio Edison Román accused of torturing him have reportedly been seen patrolling frequently near his house since he was arrested a second time. They sound their horn every time they go past.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Over the years Amnesty International has received hundreds of reports of detainees and prisoners being tortured and ill-treated by police in Ecuador.

The organization also receives reports of police officers accused of human rights violations threatening victims, their relatives and those defending them (see UA 110/99, AMR 28/10/00, 5 May 2000).

Amnesty International is seriously concerned that human rights violations committed by police officers are dealt with by police courts, which are neither independent nor impartial. Police officers who are charged are very rarely convicted and it appears that they are not suspended from duty while proceedings against them are in progress.

In April 1997 the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), responsible for monitoring compliance with the American Convention on Human Rights, published its findings on Ecuador (see IACHR, *Report of the Situation of Human Rights in Ecuador*, April 1997). The IACHR stated that one area of concern for the IACHR was that "[There] is an institutionalized acceptance among some members of the public forces that mistreatment of detainees constitutes a valid method of investigation in criminal cases" and "that despite the initiation

of criminal processes against State agents accused of torture and abuse, there are few attempts at proper investigation, and agents are not brought to trial. In fact, it is alleged that agents under criminal accusations continue to occupy positions where they interact with detainees". ("*[Hay] una aceptación institucionalizada entre algunos miembros de la fuerza pública respecto a que el maltrato a los detenidos constituye un método válido de investigación en casos penales" y "a pesar de la iniciación de procesos penales contra agentes del Estado acusados de tortura o abusos, hay pocos intentos de una investigación adecuada, y los agentes no son llevados a juicio. De hecho, se alega que los agentes contra quienes existen acusaciones penales continúan ocupando posiciones en las que habitualmente interactúan con detenidos"*).

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

- expressing concern that Julio Edison Román Muñoz was reportedly tortured in police custody and that he received a death threat from police officers following his complaint about the torture;
- expressing concern for his safety;
- asking that all necessary steps be taken to guarantee his safety;
- requesting a prompt and effective investigation into the torture and intimidation of Julio Edison Román, that the findings be published, that those responsible be brought to justice, and that the victim receives adequate compensation.

**APPEALS TO:**

Minister of the Interior and Police

Dr. Antonio Andretta Ariza  
Ministerio de Gobierno y Policía  
Benalcázar y Espejo  
Quito  
ECUADOR

**Fax: + 593 2 580-067**

**Salutation: Señor Ministro/ Dear Minister**

Head of the National Police

General Inspector  
Dr. Mario Cevallos Moreno  
Comandante General de la Policía Nacional  
Ramírez Dávalos 612 y Av. 10 de Agosto  
Quito  
Ecuador

**Fax: + 593 2 506-066**

**Salutation: Señor Comandante General/Dear Commander General**

**COPIES TO:**

Human Rights Organization

Comisión Ecuménica de Derechos Humanos (CEDHU)  
Casilla 17-03 -720  
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 21 June 2000.