

EXTERNAL

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Prisoner of conscience / Fear of torture 4 November 1997

VENEZUELA Yonny Orlando Mora, President of the Collection Centre for Milk Production (*Presidente del Centro de Acopio de la Producción de Leche*)
Residents of village of Chorrosequero

A man who recently provided accommodation to a human rights defender has been arrested and it is feared that he may have been tortured in incommunicado military custody. Amnesty International is concerned for his safety.

Members of the National Guard (*Guardia Nacional*) arrived at Yonny Orlando Mora's home on 23 October 1997 and informed his wife that he should present himself the next day at the National Guard detachment in the village of Cantón. On 24 October, Yonny Orlando Mora went to the National Guard post where he was arrested. The National Guard told his wife that he was under investigation for holding subversive meetings in his house. Later on 24 October, Yonny Orlando Mora was transferred to the Theatre of Operations No. 1 (*Teatro de Operaciones No. 1*) in Guasqualito, where he is still believed to be held.

A week before Yonny Orlando Mora's arrest, a representative from the *Red de Apoyo por la Justicia y la Paz*, Justice and Peace Support Network, stayed at his home. The delegate was visiting the area to investigate reports of serious human rights violations in and around the village of Chorrosequero in the border state of Apure. It is believed that Yonny Orlando Mora's arrest is linked to his providing accommodation to the Red de Apoyo representative.

In view of the widespread allegations of torture by members of the security forces and particularly the army in Guasqualito and other areas of Apure, there are serious fears for Yonny Orlando Mora's safety.

Amnesty International remains seriously concerned for the safety of the inhabitants of the village of Chorrosequero in the face of continuing military operations in the area (see below).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In August 1997 naval lieutenant Carlos Bastardo Iguaro was abducted by members of a Colombian guerrilla group and held for nine days before being rescued by the Venezuela army. A number of villagers from Chorrosequero, including several minors, were subsequently arrested in connection with the abduction and some, including a 12-year-old boy, were reportedly tortured. All have since been released. The area remains under a state of siege with security operations under the control of the Venezuelan army who continue to subject local residents to arbitrary arrests and ill-treatment.

Amnesty International has expressed increasing concern about serious human rights violations by the security forces in the areas bordering Colombia. Several constitutional safeguards suspended by President Caldera in June 1994 remain in force in the border region. These include the right not to be arrested or imprisoned unless caught *in flagranti delicto*, the right to non-interference in the home and the right to freedom of movement. Suspension of these safeguards leaves the door open to arbitrary acts by the security forces with little chance of redress for the victims.

Human rights defenders, political and community activists are increasingly the target of harassment, intimidation and arbitrary arrest. The arrest of Yonny Orlando Mora in the wake of the visit by a human rights defender is clearly intended to intimidate the local population to warn them against giving information about human rights violations perpetrated by members of the Venezuelan army to human rights organizations.

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

- expressing serious concern at the arbitrary arrest of Yonny Orlando Mora;
- calling for Yonny Orlando Mora to have immediate access to an independent doctor to carry out a full medical examination, and to a lawyer;
- calling for his immediate and unconditional release and for measures to guarantee his safety;
- calling for immediate measures to guarantee the safety of the inhabitants of Chorrosquero, for prompt and effective investigations into any reports of human rights abuses and for those responsible to be brought to justice;

if possible also:

- calling for a clear and unequivocal undertaking from the Venezuelan authorities to honour President Rafael Caldera's public commitment to the defence of human rights by ensuring full and effective protection for the work of human rights defenders in the country.

APPEALS TO:

1) Minister of the Presidency

Doctor Asdrúbal Aguiar
Secretaría de la Presidencia
Palacio de Miraflores
Caracas, Venezuela

Faxes: +58 2 861 0793

Telegrams: Secretaría Presidencia, Caracas, Venezuela

Salutation: Sr Secretaría Presidencia / Dear Minister

2) Minister of Defence

Vicealmirante Tito Maglio Rincon Bravo
Ministro de la Defensa
Fuerte Tiuna, El Valle
Caracas, Venezuela

Faxes: +58 2 662 4078

Telegrams: Ministro Defensa, Caracas, Venezuela

Salutation: Sr Ministro / Dear Minister

3) Attorney General

Dr Iván Darío Badell González
Fiscal General de la República
Esquina de Manduca a Ferrenquín,
Caracas, Venezuela

Faxes: +58 2 564 74 61

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Caracas, Venezuela

Salutation: Sr. Fiscal General / Dear Attorney General

COPIES TO:

1) Human Rights Organization

Sres., Red de Apoyo por la Justicia y la Paz

Apartado Postal No.17.476.
Parque Central
Caracas 1015-A
Venezuela

2) Daily newspaper
Sres. El Nacional
Puente Nuevo a Puerto Escondido,
Caracas, Venezuela

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 16 December 1997.