

EXTERNAL

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EXTRA 94/96

Torture / Fear of torture

19 June 1996

VENEZUELA Jesús Salvador ARRIETA, aged 58

Jonathan SOJO

Miguel DEL DUCA

José SAAVEDRA

Araciel GONZÁLEZ

Four of the above five people are reported to have been tortured in detention by members of the *Cuerpo Técnico de Policía Judicial* (CPTJ), after being rounded up in the aftermath of protests at new economic measures announced by the government. There is concern that they may now face reprisals at the hands of those they denounced as having carried out the torture. All five remain in custody, with one of them, José Saavedra, reportedly being held incommunicado, heightening concern for his safety.

Jesús Salvador Arrieta, Jonathan Sojo, Miguel del Duca, José Saavedra and Araciel González were all arrested at their homes in Zone F of "23 de Enero" district of Caracas on 13 June 1996 by members of the CPTJ. In the case of Jesús Salvador Arrieta, they came looking for his son Franklin Arrieta, and when they could not locate him, they arrested his father in his place. All were taken to the *Comisaría del Oeste*, Western Police Precinct, where four of the five, with the exception of Araciel González, were reportedly tortured.

Miguel del Duca's sister visited the Police Precinct on 15 June and denounced that Jonathan Sojo and her brother had been tortured. Further allegations of the torture of the four detainees came when the prosecuting attorney, who was assigned to the case by the *Ministerio Público* (Public Ministry), visited the Police Precinct on 18 June. The prosecuting attorney saw the detainees, who reported they had been tortured.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 5 June 1996 a number of incidents of public disorder took place in Caracas, including the burning of public transport vehicles, during protests at new economic measures announced by President Rafael Caldera, including increased transport fares and further rises on top of the ten-fold rise in petroleum prices announced in April 1996. Following the disturbances, there were reports that arbitrary detentions were carried out by a joint security force operation, including units of the *Policía Metropolitana*, Metropolitan Police, the CPTJ and the *Dirección de los Servicios de Inteligencia y Prevención* (DISIP), Police Intelligence Agency.

Amnesty International fears further human rights violations may occur, as the current situation is similar to that of June 1994 and February 1989, when a wave of nationwide violence broke out in Venezuela in response to economic measures taken by the government.

Amnesty International has repeatedly protested to the Venezuelan authorities about the widespread use of torture and ill-treatment, and about the lack of safeguards provided for people held in preventive detention. Police are allowed to hold a detainee in custody for up to eight days before they need to be presented to a judge. This is far in excess of what could be considered safe to prevent conditions which facilitate the use of torture. Amnesty International believes that the persistence of torture in Venezuela is due to a combination of factors, including this prolonged period of detention along

with the failure to implement writs of *habeas corpus*, and most importantly the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators.

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

- calling for an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the alleged torture of Jesús Salvador Arrieta, Jonathan Sojo, Miguel del Duca and José Saavedra, and for anyone found responsible to be brought to justice;
- seeking assurances that none of them will face reprisals for having alleged torture, and that they and Araciel González are currently being treated humanely in accordance with international standards;
- urging that José Saavedra be granted immediate access to relatives, a lawyer and that he, along with the other three reported as having been tortured, be examined by an independent medical physician;
- urging that all five be promptly charged with recognizable criminal offences or released.

APPEALS TO:

1. Minister of Interior

Dr. Guillermo Andueza
Ministro de Relaciones Interiores
Ministerio de Relaciones Interiores
Carmelitas a Santa Capilla
Caracas, Venezuela

Fax: + 58 2 812 890

Telegrams: Ministro Interior, Caracas, Venezuela

Salutation: Sr Ministro / Dear Minister

2) Minister of Justice

Dr. Henrique Meyer
Ministro de Justicia
Torre Norte Piso 25, Centro Simón Bolívar
Caracas, Venezuela

Telegrams: Ministro de Justicia, Caracas, Venezuela

Salutation: Sr Ministro / Dear Minister

3. Attorney General

Dr Iván Darío Badell González
Fiscal General de la República
Esquinas de Manduca a Ferrenquin,
Caracas, Venezuela

Fax: + 58 2 564 7461

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Caracas, Venezuela

Salutation: Sr Fiscal General / Dear Attorney General

4. Director General of Technical & Judicial Police

Comisario José Ramón Lazo Ricardi
Parque Carabobo,
Caracas, Venezuela

Fax: + 58 2 574 0972

Telegrams: Comisario Lazo Ricardi, Parque Carabobo, Caracas, Venezuela

Salutation: Sr Comisario / Dear Director General of Police

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Group

Sres.

Red de Apoyo por la Justicia y Paz

Apartado Postal 455

Carmelitas

Caracas 1010-A, Venezuela

Telefax: 58 2 574 1949 / 574 8005 (fax/telephone: ask "Me da tono de fax por favor")

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 20 July 1996.