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Attack on Human Rights Defender

19 March 1991

PERU

Dr. Augusto Zúñiga Paz

Amnesty International is concerned about the attempt on the life of Dr. Augusto Zúñiga Paz, head of the legal office of the Comisión de Derechos Humanos (COMISEDH), the Commission for Human Rights in Lima.

On 15 March 1991 a large letter was delivered by hand to the offices of COMISEDH, addressed to Dr. Zúñiga. It reportedly bore a stamp on it indicating that the letter originated from the offices of the Secretary to the President of Perú. On opening the letter, an explosive device was detonated, seriously injuring Dr. Zúñiga and causing considerable damage to his office.

Dr. Zúñiga has been active for many years in the defence of human rights. At present he is working on a number of cases, among them that of Ernesto Castillo Páez, a student who was reportedly detained by the police on 21 October 1990 in Lima and who subsequently "disappeared". A petition for habeas corpus filed in favour of Ernesto Castillo was initially upheld by two Lima courts, but was later annulled by the Supreme Court. Apparently as a consequence of his involvement in this case, Dr. Zúñiga had his life threatened. The Supreme Court was informed last month by Dr. Zúñiga of the threat, prior to an oral statement made to the court by him in relation to the Castillo Páez case.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In July 1990 President Alberto Fujimori assumed power. In his inaugural speech he stated that "the unconditional respect and promotion of human rights will be a firm line of action during my government" and that a national commission would be set up to guarantee respect for human rights. By the end of February 1991 the government had not spelt out the specific terms of reference for such a commission or appointed the persons who are to compose it.

Attacks on human rights defenders have been regularly reported to Amnesty International in the context of increasing human rights violations (see Attacks on Human Rights Defenders, 1988-90, AI Index AMR 46/39/90, June 1990).

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- urging that a thorough and impartial investigation be immediately ordered into the attack on Dr. Zúñiga and the offices of COMISEDH, and that the findings be made public;

- urging that the perpetrators be brought to justice;

- urging that concrete steps be taken with the utmost urgency to guarantee the personal security of all members of COMISEDH and other human rights defenders in Lima and the interior of the country.

APPEALS TO

Presidente Alberto Fujimori
Presidente de la República
Palacio de Gobierno
Plaza de Armas
Lima 1, Perú

Telegrams: Presidente Fujimori, Lima, Peru
Telexes: 20167 PE PALACIO
20331 PE SEC PRE
Faxes: + 51 14 33 7020

General Adolfo Alvarado Fournier
Ministro del Interior
Ministerio del Interior
Plaza 30 de Agosto 150
San Isidro, Urb Córpac
Lima 27, Perú

Faxes: +51 14 41 5128
Telexes: 21133 PE OCMI
Telegrams: Ministro Interior Alvarado, Lima, Perú

Señor Augusto Antonioli Vásquez
Ministro de Justicia
Ministerio de Justicia
Av. Emancipación y Lampa
Lima, Perú

Telegrams: Ministro Justicia, Lima, Perú

COPIES TO:

Señores (Comisión de Derechos Humanos)
COMISEDH
Apartado Postal 11-0247
Lima 11, Perú

and to diplomatic representatives of Peru in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 30 April 1991.