



Amnesty International Campaign for the Abolition of Torture

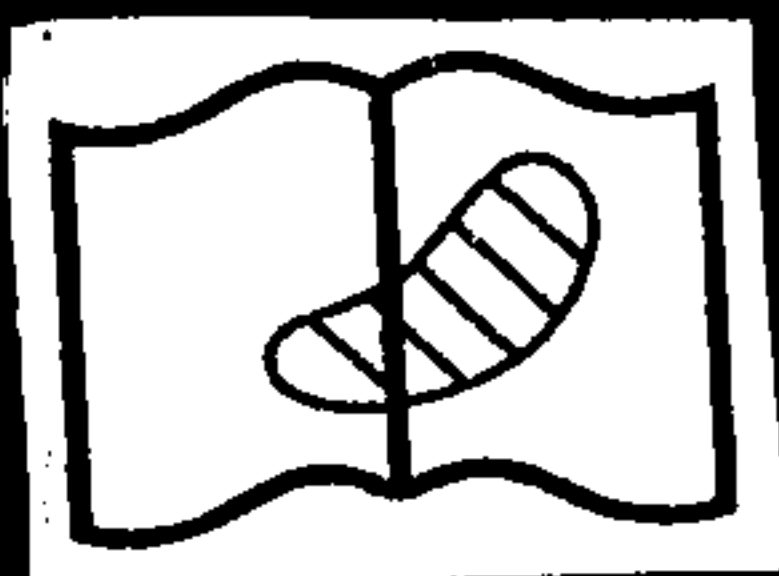


ALVARO BALBI
age 32 years, married, four children

arrested: 29 July 1975
died: 30 July 1975
official cause of death: asthma attack
real cause of death: torture
country: Uruguay

Alvaro Balbi is number 20 on a list of 22 persons who, according to information considered reliable by Amnesty International, died as a result of torture in Uruguay in little over three years.

February—March 1976:
Campaign against torture in Uruguay

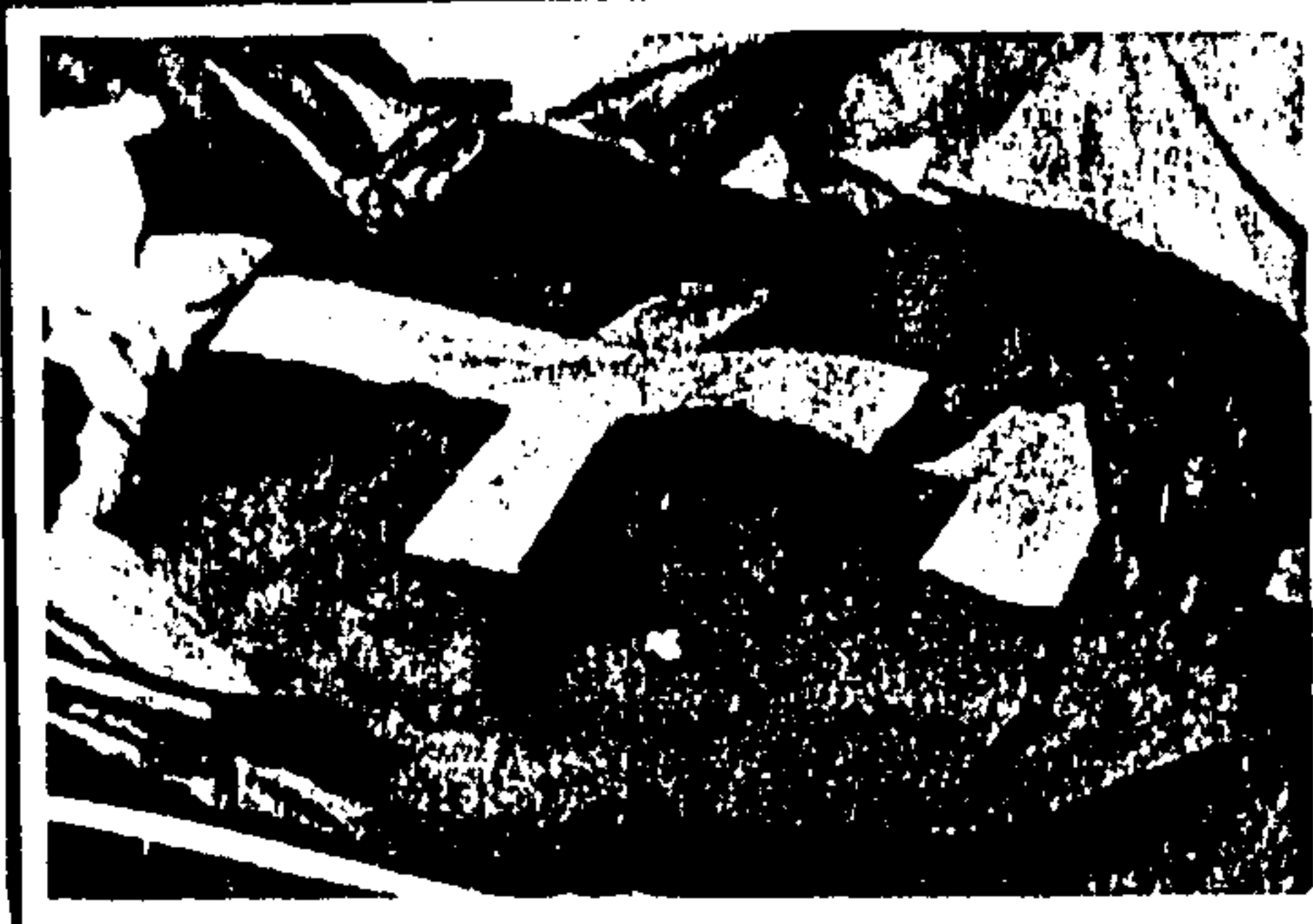


Until the end of the 1960s, Uruguay enjoyed a worldwide reputation for its tradition of peace and democracy and was known as the "Switzerland of Latin America". But with an increasingly stagnating parliamentary system and social and economic problems mounting, Uruguay was to receive its share of the internal strife and violence that swept large parts of the continent, with disastrous effects on the civil and human rights of its citizens.

Rigorous and ruthless measures were introduced to combat the often violent activities of the *Tupamaro* urban guerrilla movement and, when the state of internal war was declared in April 1972, it was only a matter of months before the *Tupamaros* were effectively crushed. But the repression that had been built up did not stop there. Through a number of moves, the most significant of which was the June 1973 coup that led to the dissolution of Congress and the banning of all left-of-center political parties, the military assumed effective control behind civilian President Juan Maria Bordaberry. Ever wider circles of peaceful dissent were affected by their desire to wipe out every trace of "subversion", and by the end of 1975, an estimated 5,000 persons were in detention for political reasons. With a total population of 2.5 million, that means one political prisoner for every 500 citizens.

Imprisoned are workers, students, doctors, former parliamentarians, trade union leaders, lawyers, teachers. Their legal rights are trampled upon by the system of military justice. They are held in overcrowded prisons, police stations and military barracks, often lacking the most basic necessities. *But the most sinister aspect of Uruguay's repressive apparatus is the widespread and systematic use of torture, routine practice in political cases.* Reports received by Amnesty International indicate that the following methods are used commonly:

- ◆ the "sawhorse"—placing the victim with legs apart on a sharp bar with is rocked
- ◆ the *planton*—prolonged standing in a fixed position, hooded, without food or water
- ◆ suspension from the *pau de arara* ("parrot's perch"), or by the wrists
- ◆ burning with cigarettes
- ◆ electric shocks, concentrating especially on the most sensitive parts of the body
- ◆ the "submarine"—near-drowning by submersion of the head in (often filthy) water
- ◆ the "dry submarine"—near-suffocation by tying a plastic bag over the head
- ◆ beatings all over the body
- ◆ thirst, hunger, prevention of sleep
- ◆ drugs, including pentothal and hallucinogenics
- ◆ psychological torture—mock executions, hooding, isolation, threats against relatives



The tortured body of Batalla

“Once they made a dog attack me. During the torture, one of them held my arms behind me and another kicked me in the stomach, while he said, laughing: ‘Look, Batalla withstood three of these, then he dropped’.”

—A Jesuit priest arrested and tortured in May 1972, the month Luis Carlos Batalla died under torture.

“As Head of State, Mr President, only you can reply to me by action, and the action required in this dreadful instance—which unfortunately is not unique in our country—should be a just, exemplary, definitive and public punishment . . . My plea springs not from any mean spirit of revenge, but solely from a longing to secure for the ordinary citizens of the Republic the guarantee that random murder will not go unpunished . . . It is right that the law should be applied to offenders. But no law, moral or judicial, allows anonymous or official forces to exact punishment outside the bounds of humanity and legality. I hope only that Alvaro’s death will be the last unjust death in this country, and that it will lead to the end of crime without punishment in this land . . . If we secure justice, Mr President, it will be a guarantee as much for you as for me in the eyes of all nations . . .”

— *from a letter to President Bordaberry from Selmar Balbi, dated 6 August 1975, about the death of his son.*

THERE HAS BEEN NO JUSTICE FOR ALVARO BALBI, FOR LUIS CARLOS BATALLA, FOR NIBYA SABALSAGARAY. THERE IS STILL NO JUSTICE FOR THE NAMED AND UNNAMED WHO ARE ARRESTED AND TORTURED TODAY IN URUGUAY. A SPECIAL AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN IN FEBRUARY AND MARCH 1976 MUST DRAW THE WORLD’S ATTENTION TO THEIR SUFFERING. YOU CAN HELP, AS YOU CAN HELP AMNESTY’S WORK FOR VICTIMS IN MANY OTHER COUNTRIES, IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD.

ARTICLE 5:

*No one shall be subjected to torture, or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
(Universal Declaration of Human Rights)*

Amnesty International has identified 22 cases of victims of torture in Uruguay who did not survive. The list is up-to-date as of November 1975, but is almost certainly not exhaustive.

1. Luis Carlos Batalla—25 May 1972
2. Edison Marin—3 June 1972
3. Hector Lorenzo Jurado Avellaneda—15 July 1972
4. Carlos Alvariza—23 July 1972
5. Roberto Gomensoro—12 March 1973
6. Oscar Felipe Fernandez Mendieta—25 May 1973
7. Gerardo Alter—22 August 1973
8. Walter Hugo Arteche—22 August 1973
9. Hugo Leonardo de los Santos Mendoza—September 1973
10. Gilberto Gowland—19 December 1973
11. Aldo Perrini Guala—5 March 1974
12. Laura Raggio—21 April 1974
13. Silvia Reyes—21 April 1974
14. Alberto Blanco—12 May 1974
15. Nibya Sabalsagaray—29 June 1974
16. Anselmo Garcia—12 August 1974
17. Horacio Mujica—November 1974
18. Ivan Morales—22 November 1974
19. Amelia Lavagna de Tizze—29 April 1975
20. Alvaro Balbi—30 July 1975
21. Carlos Curuchaga—26 September 1975
22. Pedro Ricardo Lerena Martinez—29 September 1975

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
CAMPAIGN FOR THE ABOLITION OF TORTURE

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Government of Uruguay to allow an independent international body to investigate allegations of torture".

Name _____ Address _____

Name _____ Address _____

Name _____ Address _____

Name _____ Address _____

You can sign your name to this petition, which will be handed to the government of Uruguay in June 1976. Please send your signature to the Amnesty section in your country, or to:

Amnesty International
International Secretariat
53 Theobald's Road
London WC1X 8SP, England

Uruguay is but one of the countries to which Amnesty International occasionally draws special attention concerning violations of human rights. Published reports on torture in Spain (September 1975) and the treatment of political prisoners in the USSR (November 1975) are other recent examples. In addition, its national sections and groups in almost 40 countries work every day for the release of prisoners of conscience and against torture and the death penalty in more than 100 countries in all parts of the world.

The national section of Amnesty International or its International Secretariat in London will gladly provide you with further information on how you can help its work for prisoners of conscience and against torture in Uruguay as well as in all other countries that violate fundamental human rights.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL is a worldwide human rights movement which is independent of any government, political faction, ideology or religious creed. It works for the release of men and women imprisoned anywhere for their beliefs, colour, ethnic origin or religion, provided they have neither used nor advocated violence. These are termed "prisoners of conscience".

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL opposes torture and capital punishment in all cases and without reservation. It advocates fair and speedy trials for all political prisoners.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL seeks observance throughout the world of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL has consultative status with the United Nations (ECOSOC) and the Council of Europe, has cooperative relations with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States, is recognized by UNESCO, and has observer status with the Organization of African Unity (Bureau for the Placement and Education of African Refugees).

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL is financed by its membership and by individual subscriptions from all parts of the world.

AN APPEAL FOR SUPPORT

The *Amnesty International Campaign for the Abolition of Torture* needs considerable resources in order to carry on its program and expand the scope of its activities. If you want to support the campaign financially please send your donation to the *AI* national section in your country or by bank transfer to account number 21016768 of Amnesty International, Midland Bank, 25 Bedford Row, London WC1R 6BG, England, with the specification CAT. You can also send your international postal money order with the same specification direct to: Amnesty International, 53 Theobald's Road, London WC1X 8SP, England.