

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 18/02/96

UA 80/96

Prisoner of Conscience / Legal Concern

21 March 1996

**BOLIVIA** Manuel MORALES DAVILA, lawyer

---

Amnesty International is concerned at the imprisonment of lawyer Manuel Morales Dávila in La Paz on 7 March 1996. He appears to have been detained solely for his peaceful exercise of freedom of expression.

According to reports, Manuel Morales Dávila, president of the National Heritage Committee, (*Comité de Defensa del Patrimonio Nacional*) has been detained in San Pedro Prison in La Paz accused of sedition and contempt of presidential authority (*sedición y desacato al Presidente de la República*) following his public declarations against government economic policies regarding plans for "capitalizing" (which some regard as privatization) the state-owned oil and gas company Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos.

It has been reported that he has been kept in incommunicado detention during the last five days. There is concern over the conditions in which he is being held and he has been denied access to lawyers and family.

The 9th Penal Judge (*Juez 9o. de Instrucción en lo Penal*) in charge of the case has as yet failed to rule on the habeas corpus writ presented on behalf of Manuel Morales Dávila by the Bolivian Bar Association (*Colegio de Abogados*).

Amnesty International is concerned at this failure to proceed the habeas corpus, an urgent procedure guaranteeing fundamental rights which should be considered without delay.

Amnesty International has no information to indicate that Manuel Morales Dávila has used or advocated violence and considers him to be a prisoner of conscience. The organization is calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

In recent years government austerity measures and moves towards privatization of state-owned companies have led to numerous trade union protest actions. Many of those participating in demonstration have been arrested for short term periods, some charged with sedition, and often the charges have been dropped after a short time. Amnesty International fears that the imprisonment of Manuel Morales Dávila might be the beginning of a new trend to curtail the right to freedom of expression by initiating legal proceedings against those who peacefully express their disagreement to government economic policies.

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

- expressing concern at the imprisonment of Manuel Morales Dávila for what appears to have been the peaceful exercise of freedom of expression;
- calling for his immediate and unconditional release as a prisoner of conscience;
- expressing concern at reports which indicate that he is held in incommunicado detention and ask for access to his lawyers and relatives to be granted;
- stressing that habeas corpus is an urgent procedure guaranteeing fundamental rights which should always be observed and considered without delay.

**APPEALS TO:**

President

Excmo Sr. Presidente

Lic. Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada  
Palacio de Gobierno  
La Paz, Bolivia  
**Telegrams: Exmo. Sr. President, La Paz, Bolivia**  
**Faxes: +5912 391216**  
**Salutation: Mr President/Señor Presidente**

Minister of Government  
Sr. Ministro de Gobierno  
Dr. Carlos Sánchez Berzaín  
Av. Arce esq. Belisario Salinas  
La Paz, Bolivia  
**Telegrams: Sr. Ministro Gobierno, La Paz, Bolivia**  
**Faxes: +5912 371334**  
**Salutation: Dear Minister/Señor Ministro**

**COPIES TO:**

Bolivian Bar Association  
Colegio de Abogados  
Casilla 4658  
La Paz, Bolivia

Human Rights Organization  
Asamblea Permanente  
de Derechos Humanos  
Cajón Postal 9282  
La Paz, Bolivia

and to diplomatic representatives of Bolivia accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat,  
or your section office, if sending appeals after 2 May 1996.