

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 18/05/96

UA 104/96

Fear for Safety / Legal Concern

16 April 1996

BOLIVIA Alejo Véliz, General Secretary FSUTCC
Luis García, Press Officer FSUTCC
Andrés Chávez, trade union leader
Nelson Rodríguez, trade union leader
Carmen Rojas, teacher
Nancy Terán, teacher
Sonia Ayala, teacher
Nicolás Quiroga Armiento, factory worker
Miguel Mamani Fernández, teacher
and 10 other teachers

Amnesty International fears for the safety of four trade union activists whose whereabouts are unknown following their arrest in Cochabamba on 14 and 15 April 1996. Amnesty International is also concerned that a further 15 people are being detained without charge, apparently for their participation in a trade union demonstration.

The arrests of Alejo Véliz, Luis García, Andrés Chávez and Nelson Rodríguez appear to have been made in anticipation of demonstrations scheduled to coincide with the meeting between ministers of the European Union and of Latin American countries belonging to the Rio Group in Cochabamba on 15-16 April 1996.

Alejo Véliz, the Secretary-General of the *Federación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Cochabamba* (FSUTCC), Peasant Workers Federation of Cochabamba, was arrested on 14 April 1996 by agents wearing civilian clothes, believed to be members of the intelligence services. Luis García, Press Officer of the FSUTCC, and Andrés Chávez and Nelson Rodríguez, both leaders of the Chillimarca trade union in Cochabamba, were arrested on the morning of 15 April. The arrests were carried out without warrants. Relatives, lawyers and human rights groups have been unable to find out where or on what charges the men are being held.

Amnesty International believes that the four men may be being held in order to put pressure on trade unionists in negotiations with the government. Alejo Véliz was arrested previously on 2 February 1996, transferred to La Paz, and released only after an agreement had been reached with the trade union.

A further 15 people were arrested during a small demonstration in Cochabamba on 15 April 1996. They are being held in the *Policía Técnica Judicial*, Judicial Police, in Cochabamba. They were arrested without warrants and have not been charged.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Cochabamba demonstrations of 15 April 1996 are part of a series of trade union protests against government plans for "capitalizing" (which some regard as privatization) the state-owned oil and gas company *Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos*. The demonstrations have also been in support of a petition regarding salary increases by the *Central Obrera Boliviana* (COB), Bolivian Workers Congress.

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 demonstrations have been arrested for short

periods, some charged with sedition, and often the charges have been dropped after a short time.

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

- expressing concern at the arrests of Alejo Véliz, Luis García, Andrés Chávez and Nelson Rodríguez, and of 15 demonstrators being held in the *Policía Técnica Judicial* in Cochabamba, which were made without judicial warrants;
- urging that Alejo Véliz, Luis García, Andrés Chávez and Nelson Rodríguez be granted access to their families and lawyers, and seeking assurances that they are being treated in accordance with internationally recognized standards;
- requesting the names and places of detention of Alejo Véliz, Luis García, Andrés Chávez and Nelson Rodríguez;
- seeking full details of the charges against all 19 detainees and urging that in the absence of any charge for a recognizable criminal offence they be immediately and unconditionally released.

APPEALS TO:

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: +59 12 371334

Salutation: Dear Minister, Señor Ministro

Minister of Justice

Sr. Ministro de Justicia
Dr. René Blattmann Bauer
Ministerio de Justicia
Palacio de Comunicaciones Piso 6,
Avenida Mariscal Santa Cruz
La Paz, Bolivia

Telegrams: Sr. Ministro Justicia, La Paz, Bolivia

Faxes: +59 12 356530

Salutation: Dear Minister, Señor Ministro

Mayor of Cochabamba

Sr. Prefecto Departamento de Cochabamba
Dr. Alberto Gasser
Prefectura
Cochabamba

Telegrams: Sr. Prefecto, Cochabamba, Bolivia

Faxes: +591 42 52442

Salutation: Dear Mayor, Señor Prefecto

COPIES TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Sr. Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto
Dr. Antonio Aranibar Quiroga
Ministerio de Relaciones
Exteriores y Culto
La Paz, Bolivia

Telegrams: Sr. Ministro Relaciones Exteriores, La Paz, Bolivia

Faxes: +59 12 371155

Salutation: Dear Minister, Señor Ministro

Permanent Assembly for Human Rights, Cochabamba

Asamblea Permanente de los Derechos Humanos, Cochabamba

Plazuela Quintanilla

Edificio Los Tiempos

Cochabamba, 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 28 May 1996.