

EXTERNAL

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Torture / Fear of torture

24 April 1997

CHILE **Johnny PEREZ TORRES, aged 19, army conscript**
Andres SERRANO LEIVA, aged 19, army conscript
Dagoberto CONTRERAS LLANES, aged 19, army conscript
Guillermo SAAVEDRA AGUILERA, aged 19, army conscript

Four 19-year-old conscripts are reported to have been tortured during interrogation by army officials. Amnesty International remains concerned for their well-being.

According to reports, the four men were arrested at the beginning of April 1997, accused of the killing of another conscript (see below). While it is not clear where each of them is being held, it has been reported that they have been divided between the Yungay Army Barracks and the Los Andes Old Guard Barracks (**Regimiento Yungay y Guardia Vieja de Los Andes**) in San Felipe, V Región.

A deputy of the Party for Democracy (PPD), **Partido por la Democracia**, Nelson Avila, has stated that the men have been beaten, verbally abused, deprived of sleep and threatened in order to extract confessions. Army officials have categorically denied the allegations. However, the mother of Dagoberto Contreras has confirmed that her son had been beaten, tied around the neck and tortured with electric shocks.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The four conscripts were arrested as a result of the investigation into the killing of Pedro Javier Soto Tapia, whose remains were found in the Cerro La Virgen in San Felipe in March 1997, three months after he went missing. A civilian judge is now in charge of the investigation of the killing. Amnesty international sent a communication to the Minister of Defence asking for a prompt and impartial investigation to identify the human remains and to express concern at reports indicating that Pedro Javier Soto Tapia had been subjected to ill-treatment and excessive punishments by superior officers.

Chilean human rights organizations have complained of a pattern of ill-treatment and punishments amounting to torture meted out to conscripts performing military service. The non-governmental organization *Comision pro Derechos Juveniles* (CODEJU), Committee for the Rights of the Youth, has recorded over 500 complaints of physical abuse, threats and psychological pressure against conscripts in 1996. The organization has also expressed concern at the sharp rise in conscript suicides registered in 1996, six of whom had previously complained to their families of ill-treatment.

Military service is compulsory in Chile for men and women aged between 14 and 45 years.

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

- expressing concern at allegations that Johnny Perez Torres, Andres Serrano Leiva, Dagoberto Contreras Llanes and Guillermo Saavedra Aguilera have been tortured during interrogation;
- seeking assurances that they are now being treated humanely in accordance with international standards, and urging that they be given any medical treatment they may need;

- asking for confirmation of their individual places of detention;
- asking for an investigation into the torture allegations and information on any investigation already initiated;

if possible, also:

- welcome the civilian investigation initiated into the killing of Pedro Javier Soto Tapia and asking for information into any investigation initiated regarding the reports of ill-treatment he was subjected to during his military service.

APPEALS TO

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente de la República de Chile
 Señor Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle
 Palacio de la Moneda
 Santiago, Chile

Fax: +562 694 5080

Telegrams: Presidente, Santiago, Chile

Salutation: Sr. Presidente / Dear President

Minister of Defence

Sr. Edmundo Pérez Yoma
 Ministro de Defensa Nacional
 Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
 Villavicencio 364, Piso 22
 Edificio Diego Portales
 Santiago, Chile

Fax: +562 634 5339

Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa, Santiago, Chile

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

Minister of Justice

Sra. Maria Soledad Alvear
 Ministra de Justicia
 Ministerio de Justicia
 Morandé 107
 Santiago, Chile

Fax: +562 695 4558

Telegrams: Ministra de Justicia, Santiago, Chile

Salutation: Sra. Ministra / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Newspaper

La Nación
 Agustinas 1269
 Santiago, Chile
Fax +562 698 1059

Human Rights Organization

Comisión Pro Derechos Juveniles (CODEJU)
 Santa Lucia 162
 Santiago, Chile
Fax: +562 633 5562

and to diplomatic representatives of Chile accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 12 June 1997.