

EXTRA20/99Legal concern / Medical concern / Reported torture and ill-treatment  
12 February 1999

**CHILE** Marcelo GAETE MANCILLA  
Dante RAMIREZ SOTO  
Ramón ESCOBAR DIAZ  
Patricio GALLARDO TRUJILLO  
Rene Daniel SALFATE OSORIO  
Marcos ANDRADE SANCHEZ  
and 50 more political prisoners

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Amnesty International fears for the safety of 56 political prisoners, many of whom have been injured and may require urgent medical attention after reportedly being severely beaten during a prison transfer on 6 February 1999. Subsequent reports indicate that the prisoners are now on hunger-strike.

Most of the prisoners were reportedly being transferred from *Carcel de Alta Seguridad* (high security prison) *Colina I*, to *Colina II* in Santiago. Following an argument between a prison guard (*Gendarme*) and a prisoner they were allegedly all taken out of their cells by *Grupo Especial Antimotines de Gendarmeria* (members of the anti-riot unit), some of whom were wearing face shields, where they were thrown to the ground and beaten with fists and rifle butts and doused with water and tear gas. Many of them were reportedly trodden on and beaten about the head and at least two tortured with an electric prod. Some others had their heads forced under water. All were hand-cuffed at the time.

Marcelo Gaete Mancilla and Dante Ramirez Soto are believed to have serious head injuries. Rene Daniel Salfate Osorio, who was transferred to a prison in the northern city of Antofagasta, was beaten up, blindfolded and kept tied up for over six hours.

Relatives and lawyers of those now detained at *Colina II* have reportedly been denied access to them. After special permission was granted, however, one lawyer was allowed to meet four of the prisoners. It seems they are now being held in isolation and have possibly received no medical care.

Lawyers acting for the families have filed a Habeas Corpus (a writ issued to produce a prisoner in court) and a criminal complaint (*Querrela Criminal*) has been presented before the *6to. Juzgado del Crimen de Santiago* (Sixth Criminal Court). A request filed to the *Corte de Apelaciones* (Appeal Court) for the appointment of a special judge (*Ministro en Visita*) has been rejected.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Amnesty International has repeatedly expressed concern about the conditions of detention in high security prisons in Chile. In January 1997 there were reports that several political prisoners had been ill-treated after four prisoners escaped from a high security prison in Santiago. There were also reports of threats of reprisals against prisoners who complained about ill-treatment.

In his 1996 report on Chile, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture recommended that all detainees be fully guaranteed the right "to communicate without delay and in total confidentiality with their legal counsel" [el derecho de los detenidos "a comunicarse sin demora y con toda confidencialidad con su abogado defensor" debe garantizarse plenamente]. The report also recommended that prisoners be given prompt access to any necessary medical attention. Article

19.1 of Chile's Constitution guarantees the right to life and the right to physical and psychological integrity. The UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, to which Chile is a State party, forbids the practice of torture.

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

- expressing concern at reports of the ill-treatment and torture of 56 political prisoners on 6 February 1999 during their transfer from Colina I prison and the reported serious injuries sustained by Marcelo Gaete Mancilla and Dante Ramirez Soto as a result;
- asking the authorities to provide all necessary medical care to those prisoners injured during the transfer;
- asking the authorities to initiate a thorough, independent and conclusive investigation into the incident or for details of any steps they have already been taken to do so;
- asking that access be granted to relatives and lawyers.

**APPEALS TO:**

President of the Republic  
 Señor Presidente de la República de Chile  
 Señor Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle  
 Palacio de la Moneda  
 Santiago, Chile

**Telegrams:Presidente, Santiago, Chile**  
**Faxes:+ 562 694 5080**  
**Salutation: Sr. Presidente / Dear President**

Minister of Interior  
 Sr. Raul Troncoso  
 Ministerio del Interior  
 Palacio de la Moneda  
 Santiago, Chile

**Telegrams:Ministro Interior, Santiago, Chile**  
**Faxes:+ 562 696 8740 / 699 2165**  
**Salutation:Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister**

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

**Telegrams:Ministra Justicia, Santiago, Chile**  
**Faxes:+ 562 698 7098**  
**Salutation: Sra. Ministra / Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:**

Minister of Foreign Affairs  
 Sr. Jose Miguel Inzulza  
 Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores  
 Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores  
 Catedral 1158, Piso 3  
 Santiago, Chile

**Faxes:+ 562 696 8796 / 672 6274**

Newspaper

El Mercurio

Avenida Santa Maria 5542

Casilla 13-D

Santiago, Chile

**Faxes:+ 562 228 7541**Human Rights Organization

Codepu

Brown Sur 150 - Nuñoa

Santiago, Chile

**Faxes:+ 562 341 5041**

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 March 1999.