

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Torture/Fear of Safety

21 April 1993

COLOMBIA: ~~At least five people including:~~

Heberto SANCHEZ TAMAYO, homeopath

Diego Miguel HERNANDEZ, travelling salesperson

Astrid Liliana RODRIGUEZ (female)

Amnesty International has just received the following information about the torture of at least five people from San Vicente del Caguán, department of Caquetá, and is concerned for their safety. They were tortured by members of the Colombian armed forces on 20 March 1993.

Eighteen people were travelling by river canoe from Tres Esquinas to Cartagena del Chairá in the municipality of San Vicente del Caguán, department of Caquetá when an army patrol (*patrulla del ejército*) from the Mobile Brigade No. 1 intercepted the boat at Puerto La Reforma and forced a number of the passengers to strip and disembark. These people were then subjected to torture including near suffocation in the river mud while being questioned about guerrilla activities in the area. Among those who were tortured were Heberto Sánchez Tamayo, Diego Miguel Hernández and Astrid Liliana Rodríguez. An old man and a boy whose names are not known to Amnesty International were also reportedly tortured and remain unaccounted for. According to their testimonies before the municipal human rights ombudsperson (*personero*) Heberto Sánchez Tamayo and Diego Miguel Hernández also had their arms and knees twisted and were later hanged by the feet. Astrid Liliana Rodríguez testified that she was stripped by the army major in charge of the operation (*mayor*) and handed over to some soldiers who were ordered to rape her. One soldier refused to carry out the order but the others beat her feet with a hammer, placed a bar of soap in her mouth while they crushed and twisted her breasts.

Heberto Sánchez Tamayo, Diego Miguel Hernández and Astrid Liliana Rodríguez were then transferred to the No. 36 Battalion "Montaña-Cazadores" in San Vicente del Caguán where Astrid Rodríguez was subjected to further torture. According to her testimony she was locked in a cell where a sergeant from military intelligence forced her to kneel, placed a revolver on her breast while other military personnel aimed weapons at her. The torturers forced her to repeat texts which implicated her in guerrilla activities. These were tape recorded. When Liliana Rodríguez failed in the repetitions the sergeant allegedly urinated in her mouth.

Medical certificates consistent with the testimonies of ill-treatment were issued by a doctor at the Regional hospital. One month later Astrid Liliana Rodríguez's breasts are still badly bruised and may require surgery.

Heberto Sánchez Tamayo, Diego Miguel Hernández and Astrid Liliana Rodríguez were later released. Amnesty International has no further information about whether any charges against them were dropped.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 17 April 1993 a meeting was held in San Vicente del Caguán to set up a human rights committee. About 90 people were present, mainly civic and other social leaders of the region, but also, regional people's advocates (*Defensor Regional del Pueblo*), the bishop, the police commander, a representative of the local mayor and the human rights ombudsperson (*personero*). During the meeting several denunciations were made of human rights violations committed by members of the armed forces, including the detention and torture described above. The bishop reportedly criticized the army's control of local peasants' movements, including

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the obstruction of their transporting their goods between villages (*veredas*). Denunciations were also made about the army's intimidation of the civilian population by helicopter.

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

- expressing concern at the reported torture of at least five people, including Heberto Sánchez Tamayo, Diego Miguel Hernández and Astrid Liliana Rodríguez, by members of the army's mobile brigade No.1 and in the custody of the Battalion No. 36 Montaña-Cazadores;

- urging that they receive full compensation and any necessary medical treatment from the state and seeking guarantees for their safety;

- urging for an immediate independent investigation into the torture allegations in order to bring all those responsible to justice and for the results to be made public. Urging that while the case is under investigation all military personnel implicated be suspended from duty.

APPEALS TO

1) Procurator General:

Dr. Carlos Gustavo Arrieta Padilla
Procurador General de la Nación
Procuraduría General
Edificio Banco Ganadero
Carrera 5, No. 15-80
Santa Fé de Bogotá, Colombia

Salutation: Estimado Dr. Arrieta /
Dear Dr. Arrieta

Telegrams: Procurador General Arrieta, Bogotá, Colombia
Telexes: 41224 PRGEN CO or 41213 PGNDP CO
Faxes: + 57 1 284 0472

2) Minister of Defence:

Dr. Rafael Pardo Rueda
Ministro de Defensa Nacional
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52
Santafé de Bogotá D.E., COLOMBIA

Salutation: Esimado Dr. Pardo /
Dear Dr. Pardo

Telegrams: Ministro Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia
Telexes: 42411
Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874

3) Battalion Commander:

Comandante

Batallón de Infantería N° 36

Montaña-Cazadores

San Vicente del Caguán

Caquetá, Colombia

Telegrams: Comandante Batallón N°36, Caquetá, Colombia

Salutation: Sr. Comandante /

Dear Commander

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

1) Permanent Human Rights Committee:

Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los

Derechos Humanos

AA 12817

Santa Fé de Bogotá, Colombia

2) Advocate for the People:

Dr. Jaime Córdoba Triviño

Defensor del Pueblo

Defensoría del Pueblo

Calle 34, Carrera 5

Santa Fé de Bogotá, Colombia

and to diplomatic representatives of Colombia accredited to your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 2 June 1993.