

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 28/008/2005

19 April 2005

UA 92/05 Fear for safety/death threats

ECUADOR **Francisco Velasco (m), journalist and Director of Radio La Luna**
His family
Staff at Radio La Luna

Radio station director Francisco Velasco has received telephone death threats at his home, after he allowed critics of the government to air their views on his station. The authorities have reportedly done nothing to protect him or investigate the threats, and Amnesty International believes that he, his family and staff at the radio station may be in grave danger.

Francisco Velasco is the director of the independent FM radio station *La Luna*, based in the capital, Quito. The station has repeatedly allowed critics of the government of President Lucio Gutiérrez to broadcast their views.

On 3 April, Francisco Velasco's 13-year-old son answered a call from a man who told him, "*te vamos a matar*" (we are going to kill you). Four days later, his 11-year-old daughter answered the phone, and heard the same message. On 14 April, Francisco Velasco's wife answered a call from a man who told her that "*vamos a matar a tu hijo*" (We are going to kill your son).

In February 2004, the government had threatened to close down *Radio La Luna* and file charges against Francisco after he criticised the government over the detention of an indigenous leader. Velasco (see UA 47/04, AMR 28/004/2004, 9 February 2004)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Lucio Gutiérrez took office as President in January 2003 with the support of the Pachakutic Movement, the political party backed by the indigenous communities. However, by August 2003 the Pachakutic Movement broke ranks split from the government amid accusations that the government was continuing to implement economic policies that did not serve the interests of the majority of the population. Trade unions and grassroots organizations, including those based in the indigenous communities, staged demonstrations against growing poverty and government economic policies.

The latest demonstrations against President Gutiérrez began in Quito on 13 April, and led him to declare a state of emergency in the city two days later: this suspended the rights to freedom of expression, association and movement. Following national and international pressure the state of emergency was suspended on 16 April. The demonstrations in front of the presidential palace continued, and were broken up by police using tear gas. (See UA 89/05, AMR 28/007/2005, 18 April 2005.)

Amnesty International has recently expressed its deep concern about the continued threatening and harassment of those who are critical of the authorities, including human rights defenders, journalists and indigenous community leaders (see UA 51/05, AMR 28/009/2005, 3 March 2005 and UA 54/05, AMR 28/003/2005, 7 March 2005). The organization has urged the Ecuadorian authorities on several occasions to send a clear message that such threats will not be tolerated, to ensure that human rights defenders, community leaders and journalists are able to work without fear of intimidation. It has also called upon the authorities to investigate these threats and bring those responsible to justice, but nobody has been charged.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Francisco Velasco, his family and staff of *Radio La Luna*, in Quito, after telephone death threats were made to his family home;
- expressing serious concern that this is the latest of several threats against Francisco Velasco, which have not been investigated by the authorities;
- calling for a prompt and impartial investigation into the threats against Francisco Velasco and his family, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to do everything in their power to guarantee the safety of Francisco Velasco, his family and staff of *Radio La Luna*, in accordance with their wishes.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Oscar Ayerve
Ministro de Gobierno, Policía,
Justicia, Cultos y Municipalidades
Ministerio de Gobierno y Policía
Benalcázar y Espejo
Quito, Ecuador

Fax: + 593 2 295 8360 (If someone answers, please ask: "Tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Dear Minister/Señor Ministro

Acting Attorney General

Dra. Cecilia Armas
Ministra Fiscal Subrogante
Fiscalía General del Estado
Av. Eloy Alfaro N°32-240 y República
Quito, Ecuador

Fax: + 593 2 255 8565 (If someone answers, please ask: "Tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Dear Acting Attorney General/Sra. Ministra Fiscal Subrogante

COPIES TO:

Radio La Luna

Francisco Velasco
Director
Radio La Luna
Av. América 32-144 (frente al colegio San Gabriel)
Quito, Ecuador

and to diplomatic representatives of Ecuador accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 31 May 2005.