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@POSSIBLE "DISAPPEARANCE" OF ARMY RECRUIT

NOVEMBER 1993

AI INDEX: AMR 28/09/93

DISTR: SC/CO

Amnesty International is concerned about the possible "disappearance" of 19-year-old army recruit Nixon Alcides PACHECO GUIJARRO while doing his military service.

Nixon Pacheco was enrolled for his military service on 16 January 1993 in Quito, the capital. On that day he was sent in a hired bus, together with other recruits, to the Shell detachment based near Puyo, capital of Pastaza province. The detachment reportedly functions as a clearing point for recruits that are sent to the eastern region of the country. Two weeks after the enrolment, Cecilia Guijarro, mother of Nixon Pacheco, travelled to the Shell detachment, where she was told that her son had been assigned to a military detachment in Coca, Napo province. After ten days in Coca, without getting any information as to her son's whereabouts, she returned to Quito.

In Quito Cecilia Guijarro visited the *Dirección de Movilización del Comando Conjunto de las Fuerzas Armadas*, Mobilization Directorate of the Joint Command of the Armed Forces, where she was told that her son had been sent to the *Batallón Selva N° 48 "SANGAY"*, based in Lorocachi. This is an area located on the border with Colombia and difficult to be reached. From Quito Cecilia Guijarro made several calls to the Lorocachi army barracks and was told that her son could not attend the phone. She was eventually told that her son was not there.

All attempts to locate Nixon Pacheco have resulted in the authorities failing to give precise information as to Nixon Pacheco's whereabouts. As a result, in mid-May Nixon Pacheco's mother approached the Ministry of National Defence and was told that her son had deserted the day of his enrolment. Cecilia Guijarro then approached the *Comisión Euménica de Derechos Humanos*, CEDHU, Ecumenical Commission of Human Rights, an independent human rights organization, requesting assistance in the search for her son's whereabouts. CEDHU wrote to the Ministry of National Defence and the Mobilization Directorate asking for information on Nixon Pacheco.

On 9 June the Mobilization Directorate wrote a letter to CEDHU in which it stated: "The mentioned citizen was enrolled... in Quito on 16 January 1993 and destined to the BS-48 "SANGAY" battalion based in the province of Pastaza, and which has a garrison in Lorocachi" (unofficial translation). On 23 June, the Ministry of National Defence wrote to CEDHU stating that "...citizen Pacheco Guijarro, Nixon Alcides, was recruited ...to do his military service in the

Batallón Selva N° 48 "SANGAY" in Lorocachi, but during the trip from Quito to Shell, in the village of Lasso... Mr. Pacheco deserted" (unofficial translation).

The driver of the army-rented bus that took Nixon Pacheco and other recruits from Quito to the Shell detachment was interviewed by representatives of human rights organizations. On being shown a photograph of Nixon Pacheco the driver confirmed that Nixon Pacheco was on the bus and that he arrived at the Shell detachment.

On 7 September a picket took place in front of the Ministry of National Defence protesting at the alleged "disappearance" by the army of Nixon Pacheco. The following day Cecilia Guijarro was reportedly approached by two men dressed in civilian clothes who claimed to be members of the Ministry of National Defence. She says that the men offered her money provided she stopped inquiring about her son's whereabouts. As she refused the offer she was told that she could face the same fate as her son. (See UA 374/93, AI Index AMR 28/08/93, dated 25 October 1993). Subsequently, Cecilia Guijarro was reported to have been followed on three further occasions, two of them by the same men. On the last of these occasions she was reportedly told by the men to "go and look for your son in the morgue".

On 10 September 1993, an independent human rights organization, the *Asamblea Permanente de Derechos Humanos*, Permanent Assembly for Human Rights, wrote a letter to the *Tribunal de Garantías Constitucionales*, TGC, Tribunal of Constitutional Guarantees, denouncing the "disappearance" of Nixon Pacheco and requesting information on his whereabouts. However, the TGC is reported to have closed the case, apparently after having received a letter from the Ministry of National Defence reiterating that Nixon Pacheco had deserted.

Amnesty International believes that the contradictory information provided by different army units regarding Nixon Pacheco's whereabouts and the alleged threats made to his mother by members of the Ministry of National Defence indicate the possible involvement of the military into his "disappearance".

KEYWORDS: DISAPPEARANCES / HARASSMENT / MILITARY AS VICTIMS / JUVENILES / FAMILIES / WOMEN / CONSCRIPTION /
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