

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear for safety

23 November 1993

ECUADOR José María Cabascango, indigenous leader

Amnesty International is concerned for the physical safety of José María Cabascango, a leader of the *Confederación Nacional Indígena del Ecuador*, CONAIE, National Indigenous Confederation of Ecuador.

On 22 November 1993 José María Cabascango arrived back in Ecuador, having attended an international meeting in Canada organized by the First Nations of the Americas Inter-Continental Working Group on Human Rights and Bio-Diversity. While in Canada José María Cabascango gave a radio interview in which he condemned the Ecuadorean government's treatment of indigenous people. The interview was broadcast three times to the Latin American region.

Immediately following his departure by air for Quito, the capital, the organizers of the meeting received an anonymous telephone call in which the caller suggested that José María Cabascango's life would be in jeopardy upon his return to Quito. Amnesty International has not been able to ascertain where the caller telephoned from.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Throughout the past few years Ecuador's indigenous communities have been engaged in numerous and protracted campaigns around the issue of land and property rights. The campaigns have been directed against multi-national oil companies, large private land-owners, and government authorities perceived by the CONAIE and other indigenous organizations as favouring the interests of the companies and landowners. The campaigns have involved marches, demonstrations, the blocking of main highways, and the occupation of land over which the indigenous communities claim to have rights.

These campaigns have resulted in the authorities mobilizing the army and police forces. On occasions the security forces have been accused of using excessive force in attempting to control the public demonstrations; on others national and regional indigenous leaders are reported to have been harassed and threatened by the authorities.

Amnesty International does not take sides in these disputes. However, the organization is concerned that the authorities at all times ensure that standards enshrined in international human rights law are enforced.

In June 1991 Amnesty International called for a full and independent investigation into allegations that José María Cabascango had been detained and tortured by members of the *Servicio de Investigación Criminal*, SIC, Criminal Investigation Service, following his participation in one of the campaigns organized by Ecuadorean indigenous communities (see Ecuador: Torture of an

Indian Leader, AMR 28/03/91, July 1991). The SIC, a branch of the *Policía Nacional*, National Police, was dissolved in September 1991 after a government-appointed commission of inquiry concluded that torture and ill-treatment of detainees had been used as a technique of interrogation by some of its personnel.

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

- Expressing concern for the safety of José María Cabascango, following an anonymous telephone call made to the First Nations of the Americas Inter-Continental Working Group on Human Rights and Bio-Diversity, in which it was suggested that his life would be in danger on his return to Ecuador from Canada;
- requesting the authorities take all the necessary steps to ensure that he be given adequate protection.

APPEALS TO

1) President of the Republic of Ecuador

Sr. Sixto Durán Ballén
 Presidente de la República del Ecuador
 Palacio de Gobierno
 García Moreno 1043
 Quito, ECUADOR

Telegrams: Presidente Ballén, Quito, Ecuador
Telexes: 22375/22201 prerep ed
Salutation: Sr Presidente / Dear Mr President

2) Minister of the Government and Police

Sr. Ministro Marcelo Santos
 Marcelo Santos
 Ministro de Gobierno y Policía
 Ministerio de Gobierno y Policía
 Espejo y Benalcázar
 Quito, ECUADOR

Telegrams: Ministro Santos, Quito, Ecuador
Telexes: 22354 mingob ed
Salutation: Sr Ministro / Dear Minister

3) President of the Tribunal of Constitutional Guarantees

Dr. Carlos Jaramillo Díaz
 Presidente
 Tribunal de Garantías Constitucionales
 Tarqui 315
 Quito, ECUADOR

Telegrams: Dr Díaz, Tribunal de Garantías Constitucionales, Quito, Ecuador
Salutation: Sr Presidente / Dear Mr President

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Human Rights Organization

Comisión Ecuménica de Derechos Humanos
 Apartado 720 A
 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 4 January 1994.