

EXTERNAL

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UA 235/95

Fear for Safety / Fear of Torture

12 October 1995

ECUADORRamón Alirio PÉREZ VARGAS

Martha Cecilia SÁNCHEZ (f)

Chesman CAÑÓN TRUJILLO

César Guillermo DÍAZ GARCÍA

Amnesty International fears for the safety of Colombian citizens Ramón Alirio Pérez Vargas, his wife Martha Cecilia Sánchez, and Chesman Cañón Sánchez, all of whom reside in Quito, the capital of Ecuador. The three Colombians are in fear of suffering reprisals for having denounced that they had recently been tortured in an Ecuadorian military establishment. The organization is also concerned about the alleged torture of these three Colombians, and of their fellow countryman, César Guillermo Díaz García, who is now reported to have returned to Colombia.

All four Colombians are said to have been involved with the political opposition in Colombia, either as trade unionists, party activists or as supporters of the armed opposition. The four, detained in Quito on 18 August 1995, have been formally recognized as political refugees by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNCHR) and by the Ecuadorian authorities. According to the Ecuadorian authorities, they were detained in connection with a possible attack on Colombian President Ernesto Samper, during his visit to Quito in early September 1995.

Ramón Pérez, in a written testimony, stated that he was kicked, beaten, given electric shocks, his left testicle was stood on, and a bag was placed over his head into which gas was pumped. He also claims to have been forced to drink water and quicklime, a mixture which was also poured into his ear. According to a medical certificate, he suffered serious damage to an eye as a result of the application of water and quicklime. Ramón Pérez added that he was tortured in the presence of his wife, Martha Cecilia Sánchez, who pleaded that he be spared. According to Ramón Pérez, his wife was then stripped naked and had electricity applied to her breasts and other parts of her body.

Ramón Pérez testified that among his Ecuadorian torturers he recognized two Colombians participating in the torture. One of them he claimed was a Colombian army officer attached to the Embassy of Colombia in Quito, and who had previously tortured him in Colombia in November 1993. The other he claimed to be a member of a Colombian paramilitary group who answered to the name of Alirio, alias "El Burro". Ramón Pérez concludes his testimony by requesting that he, his wife Martha Cecilia Sánchez, and their children be given refuge in a third country.

Chesman Cañón Trujillo testified that he was placed in an underground cell for seven days, kicked, had electric shocks applied to his mouth, ears, hands, testicles and penis, and that a bayonet was placed in his anus. He also claimed he was told him that his family would be killed. He concludes his written testimony by stating: "*Estamos muy mal, aquí nos vamos a sentir muy mal pedimos a todas las entidades que nos saquen de aquí de estas presiones y que después buscar otro país*", "we are in a bad way, here we are going to feel really bad ... we are asking all the organizations to get us out of here, away from these pressures, and then to find us another country".

According to press reports, César Guillermo Díaz was also tortured. Amnesty International has not received any details of the treatment to which he was

subjected. However, a medical report issued by the Ecuadorian police, into whose jurisdiction all four Colombians were transferred from military custody on 23 August 1995, indicates that he presented external injuries.

All four were released without charge at the end of September 1995. However, Amnesty International believes that they are at risk of re-arrest and possible further torture.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Over the past years, Amnesty International has documented the widespread practice of torture by members of the Ecuadorian security forces. This includes reports of torture against Colombian citizens. (See *Ecuador: Four Colombians tortured*, AI Index AMR 28/13/93, December 1993; *Ecuador: Colombians tortured and threatened with death*, AI Index, AMR 28/01/94, February 1994; and *Ecuador: Torture and ill-treatment*, AI Index AMR 28/02/94, June 1994).

In addition, from time to time Amnesty International has received reports of members of the Colombian security forces and paramilitary groups operating in Ecuador. The reports have centred mainly on the surveillance of Colombians in Ecuador. One report, however, indicates that Leo Tovar, a leader of the Colombian political party *Union Patriótica* (UP), Patriotic Union, who sought asylum in Ecuador, was murdered in Quito in 1994. The perpetrators were possibly agents linked to the Colombian security forces or to their paramilitary allies.

In Colombia the security forces, together with their paramilitary allies, continue to commit serious human rights violations with virtual impunity. Over the past five years several thousand civilians have been killed by the security forces and the paramilitary groups. Members of the *Partido Comunista de Colombia*, Colombian Communist Party, and the UP, have been particular targets for human rights violations, including death threats, politically-motivated killings and "disappearances". According to a report published in October 1992 by the Colombian government's *Defensoría del Pueblo*, Office for the Defence of the People, 717 members of the UP have been killed since the party's creation in 1985.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Ramón Alirio Pérez Vargas, Martha Cecilia Sánchez and Chesman Cañón Trujillo, and requesting that all necessary steps be taken to ensure their adequate protection;
- expressing concern at the reported torture of Ramón Alirio Pérez Vargas, Martha Cecilia Sánchez, Chesman Cañón Trujillo and César Guillermo Díaz García;
- urging a full, prompt and independent investigation into the allegations of torture, that the findings be made public, and that the perpetrators be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

1) President of the Republic

Dr. Sixto Durán Ballén
 President of the Republic of Ecuador
 Palacio de Gobierno
 García Moreno 1043
 Quito, ECUADOR

Telegrams: Presidente, Quito, Ecuador

Telexes: 22375/22201 prerep ed
Faxes: + 5932 580142/ 580750 / 580716
Salutation: Excelentísimo Presidente/Dear President

2) Minister of the Interior and of Police

Ministro de Gobierno y de Policía
Ministerio de Gobierno y de Policía
Espejo y Benalcázar
Quito, ECUADOR

Telegrams: Ministro de Gobierno, Quito, Ecuador

Telexes: 22354 mingob ed.

Faxes: +5932 58 0067

Salutation: Dear Minister/Sr. Ministro

COPIES TO:

(human rights organization)

Centro de Documentación en DDHH
"Segundo Montes Mozo SJ"
Casilla 17-08-8069
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 23 November 1995.