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@FOUR COLOMBIANS TORTURED

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Amnesty International is concerned about the torture and ill-treatment that four Colombian citizens reportedly underwent in the police-run *Oficina de Investigación del Delito*, OID, Office of Crime Investigation, in the town of Tulcán, Carchi province. Tulcán is situated on the border with Colombia.

On 26 August 1993 Colombian citizens Rodrigo Elicio Muñoz Arcos, Luis Artemio Muñoz Arcos, Segundo Hilarión Morales Bolaños and José Vicente Morales Rivera, were detained in Tulcán by members of the Ecuadorean police and driven to the local OID. All four were detained on suspicion of robbery, attempted kidnapping, and homicide. According to reports, the detainees were held in incommunicado detention for 13 days by the OID.

Two reports received by Amnesty International - the first signed jointly by the bishop of Tulcán and his Colombian counterpart, the bishop of Ipiales, and the second by a lawyer and a representative of the Colombian government institution *Defensoría del Pueblo*, Office of the People's Defender - concluded that the victims were tortured and severely ill-treated in the OID centre. These reports make reference to the victims having been hung, kicked, beaten on several parts of their bodies, and strangled. The victims were also said to have had plastic bags placed over their heads into which a gas, possibly tear-gas, was pumped.

Amnesty International has also received reports issued by two doctors who examined the victims after they were transferred on 7 September to a detention centre known as the *Centro de Rehabilitación Social*, Social Rehabilitation Centre, in Tulcán. According to one official doctor who examined the prisoners on 9 September, all four victims presented injuries. A second doctor, acting for the Colombian consul in Tulcán, also examined the victims. Amnesty International has in its possession reports by this doctor in the case of two of the victims, Luis Muñoz and Segundo Morales. This doctor indicates that these two prisoners presented various injuries, including fractured bones, which in his opinion were "provoked by attacks in which hard objects were used [on them] with great force - a stick, fist, kicks etc".

BACKGROUND

Throughout the past years Amnesty International has regularly received reports from Ecuador of cases of torture and ill-treatment by members of the security forces. The majority of the reports concern cases of prisoners tortured by the police attached to the criminal investigation services. In September 1991 the *Servicio de Investigaciones Criminales*, SIC, Criminal Investigation Service, was closed by the government, following the publication of a report by a government appointed commission which concluded that torture was a regular practice within the SIC. The OID replaced the investigative function previously carried out by the SIC. Since the creation of the OID in 1991, Amnesty International has continued to receive numerous reports of torture and ill-treatment by members of the OID, particularly at its headquarters in Quito, the capital.

On 9 June 1993, the President of the *Tribunal de Garantías Constitucionales*, TGC, Tribunal of Constitutional Guarantees, wrote to the then Minister of Government and Police, Roberto Dunn Barreiro, after the TGC visited the OID headquarters in Quito. The TGC found a number of torture appliances, a water tank, and bags impregnated with tear gas, that coincide with the descriptions received from victims of appliances used to torture them at the headquarters.

The letter from the President of the TGC concluded that " *...no hay dudas de que existen presunciones de que aún...se mantienen prácticas de tortura*", "...there is no doubt as to the presumption that torture practices continue to be used". As a result a number of officers were dismissed. A newly appointed commander general of the police was reported as saying in September 1993 that the investigative work of the police would be based on a respect for human rights. However, since then Amnesty International has received further reports of torture being carried out at the OID headquartes in Quito (See UA 403/93, AMR 28/10/93).

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