

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 45/01/95

This is a limited action. Please restrict appeals to 20 per Section.

UA 229/95

Death Threats

29 September 1995

PARAGUAY Alberto Alderete, lawyer

Lawyer Alberto Alderete has received a series of anonymous telephoned death threats in his home in the capital Asunción, apparently as a result of his representation of peasant farmers (*campesinos*) killed and injured in a clash with police. Amnesty International fears for his safety.

The threats follow Alberto Alderete's presentation in mid-September of a formal criminal complaint to the courts against the Minister of Interior, the Commander of the National Police and other police officials. The complaint accuses the Paraguayan authorities of responsibility for the death of *campesino* farmer Pedro Giménez and the injuries suffered by 17 other *campesinos* when members of the Rural and Ecological police (*Policía Ecológica y Rural*) violently broke up a demonstration of over 1,000 *campesinos* in the locality of Santa Rosa de Aguaray, San Pedro department on 7 September 1995. According to eye-witnesses, police agents launched tear gas and then opened fire on the demonstrators. Three police were reportedly injured in the incident when demonstrators threw stones and other projectiles. The demonstration had been organized to support over 600 landless *campesino* families who had occupied a property in Santa Bárbara, San Pedro department, on 31 August.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Although the government of President Wasmosy has committed itself to respecting human rights, serious abuses continue to be reported, particularly in the context of land conflicts. Incidents of serious confrontations between specialist police units and landless peasant families, who have occupied large landholdings, have increased in recent months. Peasant communities attempting to establish land claims have been violently expelled by police personnel, sometimes operating in conjunction with armed civilians reportedly paid by landowners. In many cases forcible expulsion has been accompanied by mass arrests, sometimes without judicial order. Detainees have frequently been ill-treated. The majority of detainees were released without charge or trial after weeks or months in custody. Lawyers and other working to promote and defend the rights of peasant communities have, in some instances, been subject to threats and attacks.

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

- expressing concern at the death threats against lawyer Alberto Alderete;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the threats, the results of which should be made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging that, in line with the Paraguayan government's commitment to respect human rights, all possible measures be taken to protect Alberto Alderete and his family and to ensure that he is able to carry out his lawful professional activities without fear of reprisal;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the death of Pedro Giménez and serious injuries sustained by many other people when members of the Rural and Ecological police violently broke up a demonstration of landless *campesinos* in Santa Rosa de Aguaray, San Pedro department, on 7 September 1995.

APPEALS TO:

Señor Exmo. Sr. Presidente de la República del Paraguay
Juan Carlos Wasmosy
Palacio de López
Asunción
Paraguay

Telegrams: Presidente Wasmosy, Asunción, Paraguay

Telexes: 411 SUBINFOR PY

Faxes: + 595 21 49 88 09; 49 36 22; 44 27 77

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/ Dear President Wasmosy

Dr Luis Ramírez Boettner
Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
Pdte. Franco 707
Asunción, Paraguay

Telegrams: Ministro Relaciones Exteriores, Asunción, Paraguay

Telexes: 111 RELACIONES PY

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/ Dear Minister

Dr. Juan Morales
Ministro de Justicia y Trabajo
Ministerio de Justicia
Asunción, Paraguay

Telegrams: Ministro de Justicia, Ministerio de Justicia, Asunción, Paraguay

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

Señor Ministro del Interior
Ministerio del Interior
Estrella y Montevideo
Asunción, Paraguay

Telegrams: Ministro del Interior, Asunción, Paraguay

Faxes: 595 21 44 00 44

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Non-governmental organization
Rural Education and Promotion

Señores
SEAS/AR
Nicolás Krisvoshain 4233
Asunción, Paraguay

and to diplomatic representatives of PARAGUAY accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 15 November 1995.