

INTERNAL (for AI members only)

AI Index: AMR 45/02/90

Distr: SC/CO

-----  
Amnesty International  
International Secretariat  
1 Easton Street  
London WC1X 8DJ  
United Kingdom

**PABRAN 04/90**

To: All Sections  
All Paraguay and PABRAN Coordinators

From: Americas Research Department

Date: September 1990

**PARAGUAY: HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AGAINST PEASANTS**

Distribution

This document is being sent directly from the IS to sections for information and coordinators for action.

Recommended actions

PABRAN participants are requested to write courteously worded letters to the authorities listed below:

1. Recognizing that Paraguay's human rights record has improved since the new government took office in February 1989, but expressing your concern that violations against peasants and their leaders appear to be increasing;
2. Make clear that Amnesty International does not take sides in conflicts of land tenure, but is concerned at reported human rights violations occurring within this context;
3. Expressing your concern at the deaths of Nicolás Cáceres and Francisco Baez in circumstances suggesting they may have been victims of extrajudicial execution;
4. Requesting an immediate independent inquiry into the killings, in order to establish responsibility and bring those found responsible to justice, the results of which should be made public;

3. Requesting that the government of Paraguay take all necessary steps to ensure that peasants and their leaders are able to carry out their legal activities without being subject to human rights violations.

## AUTHORITIES:

Excmo. Sr. Presidente  
de la República del Paraguay  
General Andrés Rodríguez  
Palacio de Gobierno  
Asunción  
PARAGUAY

Fiscal General de la Nación  
Dr. Diógenes Martínez  
Fiscalía General del Estado  
Asunción  
PARAGUAY

Exmo. Sr. Ministro del Interior  
General Orlando Machuca Vargas  
Ministro del Interior  
Chile y Manuvirá  
Asunción  
PARAGUAY

## COPIES OF APPEALS:

Ing. Basilio Nikiphoroff  
Trabajadores  
Presidente del Instituto de  
Bienestar Rural  
Asunción  
PARAGUAY

Central Unitaria de  
Alberdi 1313  
Asunción  
PARAGUAY

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 45/02/90  
Distr: SC/CO

-----  
Amnesty International  
International Secretariat  
1 Easton Street  
London WC1X 8DJ  
United Kingdom

SEPTEMBER 1990

**PARAGUAY: HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AGAINST PEASANTS**

Amnesty International is concerned at the reported extrajudicial execution of Nicolás Cáceres and the death in custody of Francisco Báez Gómez, both peasant leaders in Alto Paraná department.

Peasant leader Nicolás Cáceres was reportedly killed on 5 August 1990 near his home in Nueva Fortuna, department of Alto Paraná, in the presence of another peasant leader, Narciso Riquelme. They were intercepted by the Alcalde Policial, a soldier and four armed civilians who opened fire. Nicolás Cáceres reportedly died instantly, while Narciso Riquelme managed to escape.

Nicolás Cáceres, aged 34, was a community leader in Nueva Fortuna and the regional leader of the Paraguayan Peasant Movement, Movimiento Campesino Paraugayo, (MCP), in Alto Paraná. In 1989 he and other families occupied the land in Nueva Fortuna and in his role as peasant leader had negotiated the expropriation of 2,000 hectares for some 300 families currently living on the land. According to reports there have been a number of internal disputes amongst the land occupiers, apparently between MCP members and peasants who organize themselves through a committee which works closely with the regional authorities (Delegación de Gobierno). The Delegación de Gobierno has reportedly made public statements claiming the MCP is a "subversive" (guerrilla) organization. The MCP, is a fully legalized organization created during the 1980s and is an affiliate of the main trade union body Central Unitaria de Trabajadores, (CUT).

Nicolás Cáceres' family have presented a formal criminal complaint (querrela) to the courts requesting that those responsible for his killing be brought to justice.

Francisco Báez Gómez was detained on 10 May 1990 in Minga Guasú, department of Alto Paraná, and taken into police custody. His body, apparently showing signs of having been tortured was handed over to his family three days later.

Francisco Báez was an active member of the legal National Peasant Organization, Organización Nacional Campesina, (ONAC), in the region. ONAC, which was created in 1986, services the departments of Alto Paraná, Caaguazú and San Pedro.

Francisco Báez' sister, Manuela Báez de Fernández, has presented a querrela to the court in the town of Ciudad del Este against local civilian and police forces for abuse of authority and as responsables for her brother's illegal detention, torture and killing. ONAC expressed its concern to the

Chamber of Deputies, Cámara de Diputados, and requested the authorities take all the necessary measures to press for the punishment of those responsible for the death in custody of Francisco Báez.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Although the human rights situation in Paraguay had improved considerably since General Andrés Rodríguez took power in February 1990, Amnesty International is again concerned at the increasing number of reports it is receiving of human rights violations in Paraguay, particularly in the context of land disputes.

Shortly after coming to power, the government of General Andrés Rodríguez initiated an agrarian reform programme and created a National Coordinating Council for Rural Development, Consejo Nacional de Coordinación para el Desarrollo Rural, (CONCODER), mandated to look into and resolve long-standing land problems throughout the country. Although a government body, CONCODER had peasant representation, including the National Coordinator for Agrarian Producers, Coordinación Nacional de Productores Agrícolas, (CONAPA), the National Peasants' Union, Unión Nacional de Campesinos "Oñondivespá", (UNC), as well as ONAC and MCP. However, in February 1990 the peasant organizations withdrew from CONCODER due to what they considered insufficient response on behalf of the government to the problems involved. In June 1990, one year after its creation, CONCODER was dissolved.

Amnesty International has become increasingly concerned at the number of reports it is receiving of human rights violations particularly against peasants and their leaders, including arbitrary detention, ill-treatment and extrajudicial execution. Such violations particularly occur in the context of the peasants' struggle to acquire rights to land and violations have been attributed by peasant organizations to the security forces and, increasingly, to civilians reportedly operating with them. Peasant organizations have increasingly denounced the violent expulsion of peasant land occupiers by the Fuerza de Tarea Conjunta, joint military and police forces. Amnesty International does not take sides in conflicts of land tenure as such, but is concerned at human rights violations occurring within this context. Amnesty International has received several reports of human rights violations in Alto Paraná department since the beginning of 1990, including arbitrary detention and ill-treatment. The organization is requesting an immediate independent inquiry into the killings in order to establish responsibility and bring those found responsible to justice.