

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 46/11/97

UA 98/97 Torture / Fear for safety / Possible death  
in custody

11 April 1997

**PERU** Leonor LaRosa Bustamente (f), army intelligence agent  
Mariela Lucy Barreto Riofano (f), army intelligence agent

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On 6 April 1997, Leonor LaRosa Bustamente, a member of the *Servicio de Inteligencia del Ejército*, SIE, Army Intelligence Service, revealed on Peruvian television that she had been tortured by members of the army attached to the SIE. Fears for her safety have been heightened by another TV report of the killing of a second SIE agent, Mariela Lucy Barreto Riofano, in circumstances suggesting she may have died in the custody of the security forces.

According to her televised testimony, given from the Military Hospital where she is currently recovering, Leonor LaRosa was admitted twice to hospital, in January and February 1997, after having been detained by members of the army attached to the SIE, and questioned under torture in connection with allegedly having leaked security plans. Leonor LaRosa showed to the cameras what she claimed to be burns on her fingertips, and displayed difficulty in walking and moving one of her arms. She also spoke of having been hospitalized suffering from a vaginal haemorrhage. She recounted that the place where she had been tortured, the basement of a military establishment in Lima, the capital, was where alleged members of the armed opposition and others were tortured.

Her account was reiterated to three members of Congress who visited her in hospital on 8 April.

On 9 April, the Minister of Defence, General Tomás Castillo Meza, informed Congress that four officers attached to the SIE are being investigated by the military justice system for allegedly torturing Leonor LaRosa. Amnesty International believes that the military justice system in Peru is neither competent, impartial, nor independent enough to process allegations of human rights violations committed by members of the security forces, whether the victim is a member of the forces or a civilian. The organization believes that the allegations made by Leonor LaRosa should be investigated under the jurisdiction of the civilian courts.

Also on 6 April, Peruvian television reported on the killing, on 22 or 23 March 1997, of Mariela Lucy Barreto Riofano, also an SIE agent and known to Leonor LaRosa. Her dismembered body was discovered on a highway on the outskirts of Lima, and her remains subsequently identified by her father and partner. According to reports, she had links to a military "death squad" known as *Grupo Collina*, which was found responsible for the killing of nine students and a professor from La Cantuta University in July 1992. Reports suggest that she could have been the officer who leaked information to journalists which led to the discovery of the remains of the La Cantuta victims.

On 9 April the Minister of the Interior, General Juan Briones Dávila, informed Congress that the circumstances surrounding the killing of Mariela Barreto are being investigated by a civil prosecutor attached to the Public Ministry.

The Minister of Defence stated that in the event of there being evidence that the cases of Leonor LaRosa and Mariela Barreto are connected, he had no objections to the Supreme Court of Justice deciding as to whether the two cases will be heard under the jurisdiction of a civil or military court.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Over past years, AI has documented thousands of cases of torture and ill-treatment committed by members of the security forces in the context of counter-insurgency operations. In November 1994, the UN Committee Against Torture expressed concern about torture in Peru. Similar concerns were expressed in March 1997 by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture. To AI's knowledge, the perpetrators of these crimes have not been brought to justice. Impunity is not only institutionalized but legalized. In June 1995 an Amnesty Law which closes all investigations into human rights violations between 1980 and 1995 came into force. Impunity is a denial of truth and justice and contributes to further human rights violations.

During the past months, AI has documented a series of events which point to a worsening situation concerning the protection of human rights in Peru. In particular the organization is concerned at numerous reports that political opponents and journalists critical of the government are being targeted because of their opinions.

It is in this context that, for example, in November 1996, General Rodolfo Robles was detained after having denounced that an attack on *Global Television* in Puno department weeks earlier was perpetrated by members of the SIE (see UA 277/96, AMR 46/23/96, 7 November 1996). In December 1996, the Peruvian newspaper *La República* revealed a plan elaborated by the SIE to target journalists critical of the government.

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

- expressing deep concern at the alleged torture of Leonor LaRosa Bustamente and the killing of Mariela Lucy Barreto Riofano, members of the *Servicio de Inteligencia del Ejército*;
- calling for immediate measures to be taken to guarantee the safety of Leonor LaRosa;
- calling for her allegations to be subjected to independent, impartial and thorough investigation under the jurisdiction of the civilian courts, for the results to be made public, and for anyone found responsible to be brought to justice;
- urging that the investigation into the death of Mariela Lucy Barreto Riofano be thorough, independent and impartial, that the results be made public, and that those responsible for her killing be brought to justice.

**APPEALS TO:**

Minister of the Interior

General EP (r) Juan Briones Dávila

Ministro del Interior

Ministerio del Interior

Plaza 30 de Agosto 150

San Isidro, Urb. Córpac, Lima 27, PERU

**Fax: + 511 2242407** (if voice, ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

**Telegrams: Ministro del Interior, Lima, Peru**

**Salutation: Sr Ministro / Dear Minister**

Minister of Defence

General EP Tomás Castillo Mesa

Ministro de Defensa

Ministerio de Defensa

Avenida Boulevard y Monterrico

Lima 33, Perú

**Fax: + 511 435 9567**

**Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa, Lima, Peru**

**Salutation: Dear Minister/ Señor Ministro**

Attorney General

Dr Miguel Aljovín

Fiscal de la Nación

Fiscalia de la Nación

Av. Abanacay, 5 cuadro s/n

Lima 1, Peru

**Fax: +511 4332773**

**Telegrams: Fiscal de la Nacion, Lima, Peru**

**Salutation: Sr Fiscal de la Nación / Dear Attorney General**

**COPIES TO:**

Human rights organization

APRODEH, Jr. Pachacutec 980

Jesús María, Lima 11, Perú

and to diplomatic representatives of Peru accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 28 May 1997.