

AI INDEX: AMR 46/14/97
15 APRIL 1997

PERU: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ALARMED AT RECENT ALLEGATIONS OF TORTURE

Lima -- An Amnesty International delegation currently visiting Peru expressed grave concern about recent revelations further confirming the use of torture by the army intelligence services.

"The revelations made by army intelligence agent Leonor La Rosa Bustamante give rise to serious concerns about the extensive and frequent use of torture by the security forces," a spokesperson for the delegation said.

Leonor La Rosa Bustamante, a member of the Army Intelligence Service SIE, revealed on national television on 6 April that she had been tortured by members of that military body. She was interviewed in a hospital where she is recovering from serious injuries suffered as a result of torture.

Fears for the safety have of Leonor La Rosa 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 while in the custody of the security forces.

In relation to the recent announcement by Peru's Minister of Defence, General Tomás Castillo Meza, indicating that four officers of the SIE are being investigated by the military justice system in relation to the Leonor La Rosa Bustamante case, the Amnesty International spokesperson said 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 allegations made by Leonor La Rosa should be investigated under the jurisdiction of the civilian courts," Amnesty International said. "Only thus can the Peruvian authorities guarantee an independent, impartial and thorough investigation both of Leonor La Rosa's allegations and of the murder of Lucy Barreto."

The organization also expressed concern for the safety of José Luis Bazán Adrianzén, a former army intelligence agent attached to the SIE, detained by the police on 11 April and subsequently transferred to an unspecified military establishment in Lima. He apparently faces charges of desertion and his detention came in the wake of declarations he made days earlier on Peruvian television about the Grupo Colina, a "death squad" widely reported to be made up of members attached to the SIE.

"We fear that, in the light of Leonor La Rosa's allegations, José Luis Bazán Adrianzén also may be at risk of torture," Amnesty International said. "We call on the Peruvian authorities to take immediate measures to guarantee his physical and psychological integrity, and to offer all necessary protection to Leonor La Rosa, since there are still deep concerns for her safety"

Amnesty International also questioned the recent statement by the Minister of Interior, General Juan Briones Dávila, in the sense that he would have no objections to the Supreme Court of Justice deciding as to whether the two cases -- should they be connected -- will be heard under a civilian or a military court.

Background:

According to Leonor La Rosa Bustamante's televised testimony -- given from the Military Hospital where she is currently recovering -- she was admitted twice to hospital, in January and February this year, 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 La Rosa showed to the cameras what she claimed to be burns on her fingertips, and displayed difficulties in walking and moving one of her arms. She also spoke of having been hospitalized suffering from a vaginal haemorrhage, and recounted that the place where she had been tortured, the basement of a military establishment in Lima, was where alleged members of the armed opposition and others were tortured.

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 La Rosa. Her dismembered body was discovered on a highway on the outskirts of Lima, and her remains were identified by her father and her partner. According to reports, she had links to a military "death squad" known as *Grupo Colina*, which was found responsible for the killing of nine students and a professor from La Cantuta University in July 1992. Reports suggest she could have been the officer who leaked information to journalists leading to the discovery of the remains of the La Cantuta victims.

Over the past years, Amnesty International 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 1994, the UN Committee Against Torture expressed concern about torture in Peru. Similar concern were expressed in March 1997 by the UN Special Rapporteur on torture. To Amnesty International's knowledge, the perpetrators of these crimes have not been brought to justice.

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