

EXTERNAL

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Torture / Fear for safety

14 March 1997

VENEZUELAFélix Faría Arias, student (24)

On 8 March 1997, Félix Faría Arias was reportedly abducted in Baruta, near Caracas, and tortured by members of the Venezuelan security forces. Amnesty International fears that he remains at risk of further attacks.

At 11pm on 8 March, university student Félix Faría Arias was about to enter the halls of residence in Baruta where he lives, when two men seized him from behind, handcuffed him and forced him into a black Land Cruiser. In the vehicle he was held face down on the floor and beaten. The two men threatened to kill him if he did not tell them about the activities of members of *Bandera Roja* (BR), Red Flag, a legal opposition political party.

As the Land Cruiser was driven around the city of Caracas, Félix Faría Arias was reportedly tortured by his abductors who beat him continually and held a gun in his mouth as they interrogated him. He was also blindfolded, while his assailants burnt his arms with a hot object, leaving more than 40 wounds on his forearm. At 2am he was thrown out of the vehicle and left on the street.

Félix Faría Arias' abductors reportedly identified themselves as members of the *Dirección de los Servicios de Inteligencia y Prevención*, DISIP, Directorate of Intelligence and Prevention Services, a special unit within the security forces.

On 9 March, Félix Faría Arias went to the *Fiscalía General de la República*, Attorney General's Office, to report his abduction and torture, and to request the attention of a forensic doctor. However, he was not attended to until two days later.

Members of the DISIP had reportedly detained Félix Faría Arias on previous occasions in relation to his political activities. Furthermore, he is one of the witnesses to the killing of university student Belinda Alvarez, who was killed at the University of Caracas on 3 April 1991 by members of the security forces. Félix Faría Arias was wounded in the same incident.

Amnesty International remains gravely concerned for the safety of Félix Faría Arias. In a similar case in July 1996, Luis Rafael Escobar Ugas was abducted and tortured. After reporting the incident to the Attorney General he was abducted and tortured once again and was forced to seek refuge in the Costa Rican embassy. He subsequently left Venezuela for his own safety.

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

- expressing concern about the reported abduction and torture of Félix Faría Arias and calling on the authorities to take all necessary steps to guarantee his safety;
- requesting the authorities to carry out a full, impartial and prompt investigation of the events of 8 March 1997 and to bring those responsible to justice;
- reminding the Venezuelan Government of its obligations to fully implement the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment which it signed on 15 February 1985.

APPEALS TO:

1) Minister of Presidency

Doctor Asdrúbal Aguiar
 Secretaría de la Presidencia
 Palacio de Miraflores
 Caracas, Venezuela

Faxes: +58 2 861 0793

Telegrams: Secretaria de la Presidencia, Caracas, Venezuela

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

2) Minister of Justice

Doctor Enrique Meier
 Ministro de Justicia
 Ministerio de Justicia
 Torre Norte, piso 25
 Centro Simón Bolívar
 Caracas, Venezuela

Telexes: 21935 MINJU VC

Faxes: +58 2 484 9522

Telegrams: Ministro de Justicia, Caracas, Venezuela

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

3) Director General of Technical & Judicial Police (PTJ)

Comisario José Ramón Lazo Ricardi
 Parque Carabobo,
 Caracas, Venezuela

Telegrams: Director General de PTJ, Caracas, Venezuela

Fax: + 582 574 0972

Salutation: Sr. Director General/Dear General Director

4) Attorney General

Dr Iván Darío Badell González
 Fiscal General de la República
 Esquina de Manduca a Ferrenquín,
 Caracas, Venezuela

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Caracas, Venezuela

Fax: + 58 2 564 7461

Salutation: Sr. Fiscal General/ Dear Attorney General

COPIES TO:University Human Rights Commission

La Comisión Universitaria de Defensa de los Derechos Humanos
 Facultad de Derecho
 Instituto de Ciencias Penales
 Sección Criminología
 Universidad Central de Venezuela (UCV)
 Caracas, Venezuela

and to diplomatic representatives of Venezuela accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 29 April 1997.