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Death threats

15 August 1994

VENEZUELA Staff of the Network for Peace and Justice (*Red de Apoyo por la Justicia y la Paz*), non-governmental human rights organization

On 5 August 1994 two staff members of the *Red de Apoyo por la Justicia y la Paz*, Network for Peace and Justice, received death threats in an anonymous phone call to their office. The threats are the latest in a series against this Caracas-based human rights organization and there is increasing concern for the safety of its staff.

The first threats against members of the *Red* were made in mid-May, after their participation in a radio program in which they accused the police of carrying out torture and extrajudicial executions reported in Caracas. For several days afterwards, anonymous phone calls threatening members of the *Red's* staff continued to be received in their Caracas' office.

In June, an Amnesty International delegation visiting Venezuela raised its concerns about the death threats with high level authorities, including the Interior Minister, and called for the adoption of effective measures for the protection of those threatened.

After receiving the latest threats on 5 August, the *Red de Apoyo por la Justicia y la Paz* presented a formal complaint about the threats before the Attorney General's Office in Caracas.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The *Red de Apoyo por la Justicia y la Paz* is active in documenting torture and arbitrary killings by members of the security forces, in promoting human rights education, and in providing legal advice for victims of human rights abuses. It has recently established a program for the medical treatment of torture victims.

In providing counsel, support and legal advice to the victims of human rights abuses and to the relatives of such victims, the organization has helped to raise the Venezuelan public's awareness about a pattern of gross human rights violations by members of the Caracas police forces, particularly the Metropolitan Police (See: *Venezuela: The eclipse of human rights*, AMR 53/07/93, 10 November 1993). Such violations include extrajudicial executions and the reportedly systematic practice of torture. While such accusations have been acknowledged by some authorities, those responsible for the abuses are rarely brought to justice.

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

- expressing serious concern about continuing death threats against members of the *Red de Apoyo por la Justicia y la Paz*, most recently on 5 August 1994;
- calling for full investigation into the death threats, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- calling for the effective protection of the staff of the *Red de Apoyo por la Justicia y la Paz*.

APPEALS TO

1) Minister of Interior

Dr. Ramón Escovar Salóm
Ministro de Relaciones Interiores
Ministerio de Relaciones Interiores
Carmelitas a Santa Capilla
Caracas, Venezuela

Telegrams: Ministro Interior, Caracas, Venezuela

Telexes: 26429 EXTER VC

Faxes: +58 2 815796

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

2) Attorney General

Dr. Iván Darío Badell
Fiscal General de la República
La Candelaria, Caracas, Venezuela

Telegrams: Ministro del Interior, Caracas, Venezuela

Telexes: 24787 EXTER VC

Salutation: Sr. Fiscal General / Dear Attorney General

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:1) Human Rights Organization

Sres. RED DE APOYO por la Justicia y la Paz
Edificio Caruata,
Nivel 2, Oficina 220
Parque Central
Caracas, VENEZUELA
Faxes: +58 2 5748005

2) Daily newspapers

Sres. El Nacional
Edificio El Nacional
Puente Nuevo a Puerto Escondido
Caracas, VENEZUELA

Sres. El Diario de Caracas
Final Av. Principal
Boleíta Norte
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 26 September 1994.