

EXTERNAL

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EXTRA 141/97

Fear of torture

21 October 1997

VENEZUELA Yuraima Lara (f), aged 22, student, member of left-wing organization, *Bandera Roja* (Red Flag)

Yuraima Lara, a 22-year-old student at the *Universidad Central de Venezuela*, Central University of Venezuela, was arbitrarily arrested on 16 October 1997 by members of the *Policia del Municipio Sucre*, Sucre Municipal Police, in the state of Miranda. Concern for her safety has been heightened following brief access to her on 18 October by a state attorney who stated that she had been beaten in the head and stomach. She is currently held at the headquarters of the security police, the *Dirección de Servicios de Inteligencia y Prevención (DISIP)*, Directorate of Intelligence and Prevention Services, in the capital, Caracas.

Yuraima Lara was detained on the Avenida Principal de La Urbina in Petare, to the west of Caracas while distributing leaflets calling for students to protest against the political and economic situation. The police officers allegedly accused her of disturbing the peace, though witnesses to her detention denied that she had caused any disturbance. The police subsequently took her to her family home which they raided without a search warrant. They took away a photograph album and newspapers produced by *Bandera Roja*.

The family presented a complaint to the *Fiscalía General de la República*, Attorney General's Office, and contacted the *Comisión Permanente de Política Interior del Congreso*, Congressional Commission on Internal Affairs. A call from a member of this commission was able to establish that Yuraima Lara had been transferred to the headquarters of the DISIP on the morning of 17 October.

Apart from a brief visit from the state attorney, others, including Yuraima Lara's family have so far been denied access.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has repeatedly complained to the Venezuelan authorities about the widespread use of torture and ill-treatment, and about the lack of safeguards provided to people held in preventive detention. By law, police are allowed to hold a detainee in custody for up to eight days before they need be presented to a judge. This is far in excess of what could be considered safe to prevent conditions which facilitate the use of torture. Together with the inoperability in practice of the writ of *habeas corpus*, detainees are left almost completely at the mercy of those holding them. Amnesty International believes the principal reason for the persistence of torture in Venezuela is the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators.

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

- expressing serious concern about the arbitrary detention and reported ill-treatment of Yuraima Lara;
- calling for her to be protected from any further ill-treatment, and for her to have immediate access to an independent doctor and a lawyer of her choice;
- calling for her to be brought before a judge without further delay and that unless charged with a recognizable offence she be immediately and unconditionally released;
- urging a full and independent investigation into reports that she has been ill-treated and that those responsible be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

1) Minister of the Presidency

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

Faxes: +58 2 861 0793

Telegrams: Secretaría de la Presidencia, Caracas, Venezuela

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

2) Minister of the Interior

Dr. José Guillermo Andueza
Ministro de Relaciones Interiores
Ministerio de Relaciones Interiores
Carmelitas a Santa Capilla
Caracas, Venezuela

Telexes: 29694 MRI

Faxes: +58 2 861 1967

Telegrams: Ministro de Relaciones Interiores, Caracas, Venezuela

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

3) Attorney General

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

Faxes: +58 2 564 7461

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Caracas, Venezuela

Salutation: Sr. Fiscal General / Dear Attorney General

4) Head of the DISIP

General Aníbal Rivas Ostos
Director de la DISIP
Helicoide Roca Tarpeya
Puente Hierro
Caracas, Venezuela

Telegrams: Director, DISIP, Caracas, Venezuela

Salutation: Sr Director / Dear Director

COPIES TO:

1) Human Rights Organization

Sres., Red de Apoyo por la Justicia y la Paz
Apartado Postal No.17.476.
Parque Central
Caracas 1015-A
Venezuela

2) Daily newspaper

Sres. El Nacional
Puente Nuevo a Puerto Escondido,
Caracas, Venezuela

and to representatives of Venezuela accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 20 November 1997.