

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 28/08/96

7 November 1996

Further information on UA 10/96 (AMR 28/01/96, 19 January 1996) and follow-up (AMR 28/03/96, 26 February) - Arbitrary Detention / Fear of Unfair Trial

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Carlos Enrique Cuellar Urapari (Ecuadorean)
Harold Herverth Paz Payaguaje (Colombian)
José Otilio Quinayas Chincangans (Colombian)
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The seven peasant farmers named above were released in early September 1996. Ecuador's Supreme Court of Justice overturned their February 1996 conviction by a lower court.

The seven had been in detention since December 1993. They were accused by the authorities of involvement in an ambush of a combined Ecuadorian army and police river patrol in which 11 patrol members were killed. The patrol was navigating the river Putumayo which marks the frontier between Ecuador and Colombia when it was ambushed by a guerrilla unit of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

The release of the prisoners follows a sustained campaign by Ecuadorian, Colombian and international human rights organizations, including Amnesty International. Their supporters argued that the seven farmers had no links whatsoever with the FARC and had been arbitrarily detained and tortured in military and police custody.

A state prosecutor acknowledged that the 11 prisoners had been tortured in military custody, and there is compelling evidence that they were all tortured again following their transfer into police custody. However, as far as Amnesty International is aware, no judicial investigation into these allegations has been initiated. Similarly, none of the farmers is known to have received any compensation for their unlawful and protracted detention.

Members of the UA Network who took part in this action received letters from the Putumayo Case Coordinating Committee:

*...The doors of the unjust prison opened, and at last all those of us
who felt the absence of justice could embrace: fathers, sons,
mothers, nephews, nieces, friends, comrades...*

Carmen Bolaños
Climaco Cuellar
Carlos Cuellar
Froilán Cuellar
Harold Paz
Otilio Quinayas
Henry Machoa

ARE FREE

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SOLIDARITY