

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 28/10/99

9 March 1999

Further information on EXTRA 25/99 (AMR 28/06/99, 22 February 1999) and follow-up (AMR 28/09/99, 3 March 1999) - Fear of torture and new concern: Fear for safety

ECUADOR Washington Fernando AGUIRRE FREILE
Christian Steven PONCE
Sergei MERINO

Amnesty International is concerned that the lives of all the above-named prisoners are at risk after Washington Aguirre was repeatedly stabbed by a fellow prisoner on 5 March 1999.

The three were detained on 18 or 19 February 1999 in connection with the assassination of opposition parliamentarians Jaime Hurtado Gonzalez and Pablo Vicente Tapia Faringnago, together with Wellington Borja Nazareno (see UA 28/99, AI Index: AMR 28/04/99, 19 February 1999).

Washington Aguirre, who has accused two police captains (*capitanes de policia*) of involvement in the assassinations, had already said that he feared being killed in custody. He is accused of being the main accomplice of those who carried out the assassinations.

After the stabbing, the authorities ordered the transfer of Christian Ponce and Sergei Merino from the maximum security wing of the Garcia Moreno Prison (*Penal Garcia Moreno*) in Quito, the capital, into military custody. Washington Aguirre, who is presently being treated in the Police Hospital (Hospital de Policia), is expected to be moved into military custody at a later date.

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

- expressing concern that the lives of Christian Ponce, Sergei Merino and Washington Aguirre are at risk, following the stabbing of the latter on 5 March 1999 while in prison custody in Quito, the capital;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee the safety of the three prisoners;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that Washington Aguirre is not returned into prison custody until he is declared by a doctor to have recovered from the stabbing;
- calling for a full and independent investigation into the attack on Washington Aguirre, that the findings be made public, and those responsible be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Government and Police
Vladimiro Álvarez Grau
Ministro de Gobierno y Policía
Ministerio de Gobierno y Policía
Espejo y Benalcázar
QUITO
Ecuador
Faxes: + (593 2) 580 067

Salutations: Dear Minister / Estimado Sr. Ministro

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Organization

Centro de Documentación en Derechos Humanos

Av. 10 de Agosto 2655

Edif. Tauro, Of. 802

QUITO

and to diplomatic representatives of Ecuador accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 9 April 1999.