

UA 70/02

Threats a**VENEZUELA Jonathan Granadino Rosendo (m), aged 22
other witnesses to a murder trial**

Jonathan Granadino Rosendo, whose testimony helped to convict a police officer of murder in 2001, has been harassed and intimidated by police officers, colleagues of the convicted officer. Amnesty International is concerned for his safety.

On 2 March he was arrested with three others at a betting shop near his home in Miranda state, allegedly for illegal drinking. In the police van, one of the three officers reportedly said to the others, "*éste le hecho paja a nuestro compañero*" (this one grassed up our colleague). Once they reached the police station, the other detainees were released after a few hours, but Jonathan was not released until the following day, after friends and relatives had been to the police station to ask why he had been arrested.

While he was in custody, the officer who had spoken about him in the van told the station commander that Jonathan had testified against their colleague.

On 5 March a patrol car was stationed outside Jonathan Granadino Rosendo's house and remained for some time. He was too scared to leave the house. Human rights groups believe this was intended to intimidate him.

In 2000, Jonathan Granadino Rosendo was a key witness to the killing of a young woman, Diraicys Machado, during a large police operation in his neighbourhood. Two police officers were charged with the killing. During the trial in 2001, before the sentence was passed a police agent threatened the witnesses. The authorities took no action, allegedly because the threats were "only words". One officer was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment for the killing and the other was acquitted.

Other witnesses in the case, including Diraicys Machado's mother, also reported fearing reprisals from the police.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the past police intimidation of witnesses has frequently prevented progress in investigations into human rights violations, and prevents victims coming forward in other cases.

According to the Venezuelan Human Rights Ombudsman (*Defensor del Pueblo*), nearly 400 people died in 2000 and 2001 in circumstances which suggested the police and security forces had been involved. They also reported that impunity for these crimes is almost total.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish, English or your own language:

- expressing concern at reports that police officers in Miranda state have harassed and intimidated Jonathan Granadino Rosendo, and urging the authorities to order an immediate investigation;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee the safety of Jonathan Granadino Rosendo, and other witnesses.

APPEALS TO:

General Attorney

Fiscal general de la República, Dr. Isaías Rodríguez
Avenida Universidad, Esquina Pele el ojo a Misericordia,
frente a Parque Carabobo, Caracas, VENEZUELA

Fax: + 58 212 576 44 19

Salutation: Estimado Señor Fiscal General/Dear Attorney General

State Authorities in the state of Miranda

Gobernación del Estado Miranda

Enrique Mendoza

Carretera Panamericana,

Kilómetro 24,

Estado Miranda, Venezuela

Fax: + 58 212 321 5775

Salutation: Estimado Señor/Dear Sir

State Police

Director de la Policía del Estado Miranda

Comisario General

Hermes Rojas Peralta

Fax: + 58 212 322 4518

Salutation: Estimado Señor/Dear Sir

Human rights ombudsman

Defensoría del Pueblo

Dr. Germán Mundarain

Bellas Artes comienzo Avenida México frente al Ateneo de Caracas

Plaza Morelos

Caracas, VENEZUELA

Fax: + 58 212 575 4467

Email: gmundarain@defensoria.gov.ve

Salutation: Estimado Señor/Dear Sir

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Group

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la Justicia y Paz

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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 19 April 2002.