

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 53/03/97

EXTRA 60/97 Fear of torture / Fear of further arbitrary arrests 28 April 1997

**VENEZUELA Wilma Rauseo (f), trade unionist
and other trade union activists**

On 23 April 1997 Wilma Rauseo was arbitrarily arrested by members of the *Dirección de los Servicios de Inteligencia y Prevención (DISIP)*, Directorate of Intelligence and Prevention Services, a police intelligence agency, in her workplace in Caracas.

Wilma Rauseo's detention is reportedly related to her trade union activism and her membership in the *Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario 200 (MBR-200)*, Bolivarian Revolutionary Movement 200, led by former military coup leader, Lieutenant-Colonel Hugo Chávez. Over the last two years Amnesty International has expressed its concern at reports of the detention and alleged ill-treatment and torture of other members of MBR-200.

Initially held in Roca Tarpeya prison, Wilma Rauseo was transferred on 25 April to the *Dirección de Inteligencia Militar*, the Military Intelligence Directorate. She was held incommunicado for four days before her family was allowed to visit her. Members of the security forces who have interrogated her during her detention reportedly threatened that they would harm her family if she did not answer their questions. She has still not been charged with any offence.

Amnesty International fears Wilma Rauseo may be tortured while in detention. A number of people held by the DISIP in the past reported having been subjected to torture.

Amnesty International is also concerned that other trade union activists may be arbitrarily arrested and detained in the run up to 1 May, when an independent labour day march is planned.

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 grave concern about the arbitrary detention of Wilma Rauseo;
- calling for her immediate and unconditional release if she is not to be charged with a recognisable offence;
- seeking assurances she is being treated humanely and in accordance with international standards;
- urging that she be given immediate access to a lawyer of her choice.

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 Justice

Dr. Hilarion Cardozo
Ministro de Justicia
Ministerio de Justicia
Torre Norte, piso 25
Centro Simón Bolívar
Caracas, Venezuela

Telexes: 21935 MINJU VC

Faxes: +58 2 484 9522

Telegrams: Ministro de Justicia, 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 74 61

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Caracas, Venezuela

Salutation: Sr. Fiscal General / Dear Attorney General

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 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 1 June 1997.