

UA 227/95

Fear of torture

28 September 1995

BOLIVIA David HERRERA, Representative of *Asamblea Permanente de Derechos Humanos (APDH)*, Permanent Assembly for Human Rights, and Coca-leaf Growers' leader

Vicente VIGABRIEL) members of peasant
 Cancio NINA RAMIREZ) unions at
 Marcial ALAVE) Parque Isiboro Sécura

Oswaldo MAMANI) members of
 Nemesio MONTAÑO) community
 José CLAROS) and
 Fausto MONTAÑO) peasant unions
 Anselmo CEREZO) in the
 José MENEZES VIGAMONTE) Chapare area
 René RAMIREZ)
 Martín VILLAMONTES)

and several others whose names are unknown

Between 19 and 21 September 1995, members of the *Unidad Movil de Patrullaje Rural (UMOPAR)*, Mobile Rural Patrol Unit, and combined police security forces carried out a wave of arrests of peasant and community leaders in the Chapare area of Cochabamba department. Amnesty International's concern for the detainees' safety has been heightened by allegations that at least some of them have been ill-treated during interrogation.

The arrests took place during the third phase of the police operation "*Agua Clara*" to control and forcibly eradicate coca-leaf crops. According to reports most of those arrested were picked up in their homes, villages or while working in the fields. They were initially held incommunicado at the police installations of the *Fuerza Especial contra el Narcotráfico (FELCN)* Special Force Against Drug Trafficking, in Chimoré, until 25 September when they were transferred to the headquarters of the *Policia Técnica Judicial (PTJ)*, Judicial Police headquarters, and the "*Policia Central*" building in Cochabamba. However, one of the detainees, David Herrera, has reportedly remained in incommunicado detention in Chimoré since his arrest on 19 September.

On 26 September representatives of the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights (APDH), *Movimiento Franciscano de Justicia y Paz*, Franciscan Movement for Justice and Peace, and members of the press were allowed to interview a number of the detainees held at the PTJ headquarters. Those interviewed said that they had been ill-treated, beaten and gagged and generally subjected to duress during interrogation.

The exact number of detainees remains unclear and official information on their names and any charges against them is not available. However, press reports indicate that Vicente Vigabriel, Cancio Nina Ramirez and Marcial Alave have been charged with participating in disturbances on 15 July 1995 in Villa Bolivar, Parque Isiboro Sécura, during which a peasant was fatally wounded by an explosive device. It is not clear what other detainees have been charged with, although their detention is reportedly connected with coca-crop production and the narcotics trade.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since the declaration of a 90-day state of siege on 18 April 1995, and its subsequent extension for another 90 days, a number of police operations have been conducted to enforce eradication of coca crops in accordance with agreements between the governments of Bolivia and the United States of America.

During this period waves of short-term arrests of peasants, union and community leaders in the Department of Cochabamba have taken place and denunciations of torture and ill-treatment of detainees and the civilian population have been reported. At least three peasants have been killed during operations directed by UMOPAR. The apparent lack of immediate and thorough investigations by the authorities into these allegations of human rights violations heightens Amnesty International's concern for the physical safety of those arrested.

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

- urging that the physical safety of all those detained by UMOPAR between 19 and 21 September 1995 in the department of Cochabamba (naming some) be guaranteed;
- requesting that a full list of the detainees and their places of detention be made public;
- seeking clarification of their legal situation;
- urging that all detainees be granted access to their families and lawyers, seeking assurances that they are being treated in accordance with international standards.

APPEALS TO:

President

Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente
Lic. Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada
Palacio de Gobierno
La Paz, Bolivia

Faxes: +591 239 1216 (if voice, ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

Telegrams: President Sánchez de Lozada, La Paz, Bolivia

Salutation: Su Excelencia / Your Excellency

Minister of Government

Sr. Ministro de Gobierno
Dr. Carlos Sánchez Berzaín
Av. Arce Esq. Belisario Salinas
La Paz, Bolivia

Faxes: +591 237 1334

Telegrams: Ministro de Gobierno, La Paz, Bolivia

Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Sr. Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto
Dr. Antonio Aranibar Quiroga
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto
La Paz, Bolivia

Faxes: + 591 237 1155

Telegrams: Ministro Relaciones Exteriores, La Paz, Bolivia

Salutation: Señor Ministro/Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Human Rights organizations

Asamblea Permanente de Derechos Humanos
Cajon Postal 9282, LA PAZ, Bolivia

Asamblea Permanente de Derechos Humanos
Casilla 2383, COCHABAMBA, Bolivia

and to diplomatic representatives of BOLIVIA accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 November 1995.