

UA 222/02

Fear for safety/
Incommunicado detention/
possible prisoners of conscience

18 July 2002

ECUADOR	Luis Muñoz (m)]	
	David Conrado (m)]	
	Juan Pablo Barragán (m)]	
	Jose Luis Proaño (m)]	environmentalists
	Alberto Saltos (m)]	
	Stalin Saltos (m)]	
	Ivon Ramos (m)]	
	Julia Butterfly (f) US citizen]	

The eight environmentalists named above were detained without charge on 16 July 2002 in Quito, the capital. They are being held without charge, and Amnesty International fears that they may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Amnesty International believes that they may be prisoners of conscience as they appear to have been detained while they were exercising their right to demonstrate peacefully.

They were part of a group of demonstrators who were protesting in front of the US oil company Occidental's headquarters in Quito, in opposition to the construction of an oil pipeline which will run from the eastern amazon basin to the northwestern coast in the Pacific.

After they were detained by the police, the eight environmentalists were taken to the *Centro de Detención Provisional*, Provisional Detention Centre in Quito.

According to INREDH, the non-governmental organization working on the case, the environmentalists have not been told the charges for which they have been detained. When representatives from INREDH went to the Provisional Detention Centre requesting that the detainees be given the right to speak to their lawyer and relatives, they were denied the request. Amnesty International considers that incommunicado detention is conducive to torture and ill-treatment.

Throughout the last few years, the organization has documented numerous cases of torture and ill-treatment in detention.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In June 2001 the Ecuadorean government gave the go-ahead to a consortium of foreign petroleum companies (Occidental Petroleum (USA) Alberta Energy (Canada) Kerr McGee (USA, now selling to a French petroleum company) AGIP (Italy), Repsol-YPF (Spain), and Perez Companc and Techint (Argentina, which are reported to be in the process of merging into a larger conglomerate)) to begin construction of an oil pipeline to deliver heavy crude oil from oil concessions in Ecuador's eastern rainforest region to refineries in the town of Esmeraldas on the Pacific coast. The crude oil will then be shipped to international markets from there via an offshore loading facility at the port of Balao, near Esmeraldas.

The pipeline's route runs through nature reserves and private property whose access has to be negotiated by the consortium. There have been organized protests to block the construction of the pipeline since the Ecuadorean government gave the go ahead. In particular, there are concerns that the route cuts through several protected areas including the Mindo Nambillo Cloud Forest Reserve. International environmentalists have joined the Ecuadorians to buy scores of hectares lying in the path of the pipeline going through Mindo. However, the Ministry of the Environment has given the consortium permission to continue construction through the protested area. In June 2001 Amazon Watch published an action against the construction of the pipeline stating: "This pipeline is likely to destroy fragile areas and spread contamination and disease. It will also increase reliance on oil -- the main fossil fuel responsible for climate change. Instead of expanding oil development into intact rainforest,

we call upon the Ecuadorian government to consider economic alternatives based on permanent protection of its forests and biodiversity."

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

- expressing concern for the detention of Luis Muñoz, David Conrado, Juan Pablo Barragán, José Luis Proaño, Alberto Saltos, Stalin Saltos, Ivon Ramos, and Julia Butterfly (a US citizen);
- stating that according to the information received by Amnesty International these people were exercising their right to demonstrate peacefully;
- urging the authorities to charge them with a recognizable offence or to release them immediately and unconditionally;
- reminding the authorities that incommunicado detention is conducive to torture and ill-treatment, and seeking assurances that the eight environmentalists will be safeguarded from any form of ill-treatment or torture;
- urging the authorities to ensure that they have access to their lawyers, families, and any medical care they may need.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior
Ministerio de Gobierno y Policía
Dr. Rodolfo Barniol
Ministerio de Gobierno y Policía
Benalcázar y Espejo
Quito, Ecuador

Telegrams: Ministro de Gobierno y Policía, Quito, Ecuador

Fax: + 593 2 2583966

Salutation: Sr Ministro/Dear Minister

Minister of Tourism and Environment
Ministra de Turismo y Medio Ambiente
Sra. Rocío Vásquez
Avds. Eloy Alfaro y Amazonas
Edificio del MAG, 7mo. Piso
Quito, Ecuador

Telegrams: Ministra de Turismo y Medio Ambiente, Quito, Ecuador

Fax: + 593 2 2500041

Salutation: Sra Ministra/Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Organization
INREDH
Tamayo 957 y Foch
Quito, Ecuador
Casilla 17 -03-1461
Quito, Ecuador

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 29 August 2002.