

PUBLIC

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UA 189/01

Death threats/fear for safety

26 July 2001

ECUADOR

Alexis Ponce (m) - Human Rights Defender

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Human rights defender Alexis Ponce has received death threats. His name has previously appeared on a "death list".

Alexis Ponce is the spokesperson (*vocero*) and founder of The Permanent Association for Human Rights, *Asociación Permanente por los Derechos Humanos*, (APDH).

On 23 July 2001, he received an anonymous phone call at the office of the APDH in Quito. The caller asked for Alexis Ponce presenting himself as a travel agent. Once Alexis was on the phone the caller said: "We are from your travel agency to the other world son of a bitch", (*somos detu agencia de viajes al otro mundo, hijo de puta*) and added: "You left-wing son of a bitch, this time you will go directly to the cemetery ... you will die this week son of a bitch! If you continue hassling [us], you will have a few days left. We are going to kill you before your very eyes, in broad daylight, communist son of a bitch!; (*mira izquierdista hijo de puta, esta vez te vas directo al cementerio ... morirás en esta misma semana hijo de puta!... sigue jodiendo que te quedan pocos días, a plena luz del día y de frente te vamos a liquidar, comunista hijo de puta*).

The previous day Alexis Ponce was searched in Quito Airport as he was about to travel to Spain. He had publicly complained about the search which had caused him to miss his flight.

In February 1999, a day after the assassination of an opposition parliamentarian, Jaime Hurtado Gonzalez, the APDH received threatening phone calls forcing them to move to different offices. A few days later Alexis Ponce heard that his own name was on the same death list as Jamie Hurtado and left Quito. Friends looking after his house received anonymous telephone threats. On 12 March 1999, while his friends were out, his house was broken into. (For further information see: UA 51/99, AMR 28 13/99, 22 March 1999.)

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In June 1999, the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) adopted a resolution stating their intention to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which the UN passed on 9 December 1998. The UN agreed to "recognize and support the work carried out by Human Rights Defenders and their valuable contribution to the promotion, observance, and protection of fundamental rights and freedoms in the Americas". The resolution called on state members to provide "Human Rights Defenders with the necessary guarantees and facilities to continue freely carrying out their work of promoting and protecting human rights", as well as to adopt "the necessary steps to guarantee their life, liberty, and integrity".

If Ecuador is serious about protecting and promoting human rights, human rights defenders in the country must be able to work without intimidation.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Alexis Ponce;
- asking the authorities to do everything necessary to protect him, so he can continue his legitimate activities in safety;
- asking the authorities to order a prompt and effective investigation into the threats he have been subjected to, to publish the findings and bring those responsible to justice.

**APPEALS TO:**

Minister of the Interior and Police

Dr. Juan Manrique Martínez

Ministerio de Gobierno y Policía

Benalcázar y Espejo

Quito

ECUADOR

**Fax: + 593 2 580-067**

**Telegram: Ministerio de Gobierno, Quito, Ecuador**

**Salutation: Señor Ministro/ Dear Minister**

Head of the National Police

Ing. Jorge Guillermo Molina Nuñez

Comandante General de la Policía Nacional

Ramírez Dávalos 612 y Av. 10 de Agosto

Quito

Ecuador

**Fax: + 593 2 508 724 / + 593 2 506 066**

**Telegram: Comandante General Policia Nacional, Quito, Ecuador**

**Salutation: Señor Inspector General/Dear Chief Inspector**

**COPIES TO:**

Human Rights Organizations

Asamblea Permanente de Derechos Humanos del Ecuador, APDH

Casilla: 17-15-24C

Quito, Ecuador

**E-mail: apdhec@hotmail.com**

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 6 September 2001.