

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/death threats

09 January 2006

PERU

Iscra Chávez Loaiza (f), Director of human rights organization APORVIDHA
Freddy Rodríguez Olivera (m), APORVIDHA lawyer
Evelyn Zevallos Enriquez (m), APORVIDHA lawyer
Other APORVIDHA staff

Staff of a human rights organization involved in the prosecution of former members of the security forces have been threatened, and Amnesty International believes their lives may be in danger. The threats appear to be intended to silence the victims of human rights violations and those who are trying to help them in their legitimate pursuit of justice.

The Asociación por la Vida y la Dignidad Humana (APORVIDHA) is providing legal representation to victims of human rights violations committed during the internal armed conflict of 1980-2000, and their relatives. The investigation and prosecution of military and police officers accused of these human rights increased during 2005, and this has led to an increase in the intimidation of organizations like APORVIDHA by people believed to have links to the security forces.

APORVIDHA's director, Iscra Chávez Loaiza, is now known to have received an anonymous text message on her mobile phone on 3 December, which read: *Te estoy vigilando. Cuídate tú y tus hijas. Están en la mira. No viajes, te puede ir mal, muy mal* ("I am watching you. You and your daughters should be careful. You are in our sights. Do not travel anywhere, things can go wrong for you, very wrong"). Two of the organization's lawyers, Freddy Rodríguez Olivera and Evelyn Zevallos Enriquez, received similar threatening text messages the following day.

At present APORVIDHA is providing legal assistance to the relatives of 34 peasants who were killed in 1984 in the community of Lucmahuayco, in the southern department of Cuzco. The police and military force that allegedly carried out the massacre claimed that the peasants were members of the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) armed opposition group. This is one of the scores of cases of grave human rights violations now being pursued by the Public Prosecutor's office after the government-appointed *Comisión de Verdad y Reconciliación*, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, handed them their report.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Peruvian government set up the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2000, to bring to justice those who carried out human rights violations during the internal armed conflict. The Commission published its final report in 2003, and since then the victims, their relatives, witnesses, and those working on their behalf during investigations and trials have suffered increasing threats and intimidation.

The lack of protection for these people is such that the office of the Ombudsman (Defensoria del Pueblo) expressed serious concern and urged the authorities to guarantee that they would be effectively protected, in its September 2005 report, entitled *A dos años de la Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación*, Two years on from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The national umbrella group of human rights organizations, the Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos, presented a report to the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights in October 2005. The report detailed 46 cases of such people being harassed, intimidated and threatened during 2005. In December 2005, staff of the human rights organization Comisión de Derechos Humanos (COMISEDH) were threatened in similar circumstances, by people believed to be linked to the security forces (see UA 324/05, AMR 46/017/2005, 20 December 2005). Amnesty International is not aware of any investigation being opened into these threats.

The UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organizations of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 9 December 1998 (more commonly known as the "UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders") and the Organization of American States (OAS) Resolutions of June 1999 and June 2000 on Human Rights Defenders in the Americas call on member states to work harder to protect them and promote their work. Peru is part of both the UN and OAS and is clearly failing to take action to protect human rights defenders.

It is vitally important that human rights defenders are able to carry out their legitimate activities without fear. If the Peruvian authorities are serious about protecting and promoting human rights, they must send a clear message that they will not tolerate intimidation or harassment of human rights defenders.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of all staff of APORVIDHA, after anonymous death threats were sent to the organization's director and two of its lawyers;
- urging the authorities to take steps to guarantee the safety of APORVIDHA staff, in accordance with their own wishes;
- urging the authorities to carry out an independent and impartial investigation of the intimidation of APORVIDHA, making the results public and bringing those responsible to justice;
- urging the authorities to send a clear public message that they will not tolerate intimidation and harassment of human rights defenders.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Rómulo Pizarro Tomasio

Ministro del Interior, Ministerio del Interior

Plaza 30 de Agosto s/n, Urb. Córpac, San Isidro, Lima 27, PERU

Fax: +51 1 225 7234

Salutation: Dear Minister/Estimado Sr. Ministro

Attorney General

Dra. Adelaida Bolívar Arteaga

Fiscal de la Nación, Fiscalía de la Nación

Av. Abancay, cuadra 5 s/n, Lima 1, PERU

Fax: +51 1 427 1792

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Estimada Sra. Fiscal de la Nación

COPIES TO:

APORVIDHA

Av. Pardo 641, Letra D, Cuzco, PERU

Fax: +51 8 4241209

E-mail: aporvidha@dhperu.org

and to diplomatic representatives of Peru accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 20 February 2006.