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PERU

@ "DISAPPEARANCE" OF TWO YOUNG MEN OF THE PROTESTANT CHURCH

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Further to Urgent Action UA 181/91, AI Index: AMR 46/24/91, Amnesty International has now received additional information regarding the "disappearance" of 17-year-old student Manuel Meneses Sotacuro. The additional information provides the name of the other person who was detained with Manuel Meneses and has also "disappeared". It also indicates that people who have testified on behalf of the two young men are being subjected to harassment.

According to the reports, Manuel Meneses, a member of the Peruvian Evangelical Church, was detained on 20 May 1991 with 19-year-old Félix Inga Cuya, the director of the Escuela Dominical de la Iglesia Pentecostal de Jesucristo, Sunday School of the Pentecostal Church of Jesus Christ in Chilca district, in the city of Huancayo, Junín department. The detentions were reportedly carried out by members of the Policía de Seguridad, the Security Police, and, according to the new information, the detainees were firstly taken to the Millotingo police station and later to the 9 de Diciembre army base. Both police and army authorities refuse to acknowledge the detentions. However, this information has been confirmed by some lower ranking police officers and a member of the Policía Técnica de Huancayo, the investigative police of Huancayo.

Manuel Meneses Sotacuro came to Huancayo as Huancavelica's youth delegate to take part in a meeting called by the Sínodo Regional del Centro, the Regional Synod of the Centre, from 1 to 19 of May, and later decided to stay for a few more days. On 20 May in the early morning, he was waiting outside a bookshop located in the building of Audiciones Radiales del Centro, Central Radio Auditions, the radio station of a German-Peruvian Protestant mission. He was joined by Félix Inga Cuya who had come to get some literature about the courses that the radio offers.

According to several witnesses from the radio station, including a teacher of both the young men, policemen of the Millotingo Police Station forced both men into a red van without asking them to identify themselves or to explain their presence outside the building.

Later that afternoon six armed and uniformed men with their faces covered with balaclavas, driving a pick-up van a police car, brought Manuel Meneses to the house where he had been lodging and searched the place for any incriminating evidence, but left empty-handed. Manuel Meneses showed signs consistent with having been tortured, according to the owners of the house, who testified before the Fiscalía Especial de Defensoría del Pueblo y Derechos Humanos, the Office of the Special Attorney for the Defence of Human Rights.

Further information received indicates that the Millotingo Security Police Station registered the detention of two young men with the characteristics of Manuel Meneses and Félix Inga, who were transferred to the 9 de Diciembre army barracks. The date and time of the detentions coincide with that of the young Protestant men, but the names are different. Peruvian human rights organizations fear that these may be the same persons whose detentions are being denied by the army.

Apart from the above mentioned denunciation, two writs of habeas corpus have been presented, but which were reportedly rejected merely on the grounds that the names of the men were not registered at the police station nor the army base. However, a full investigation into the matter was never carried out and a number of relevant points were left unclarified.

Concern has been expressed that witnesses who testified on behalf of the two men and those involved in the investigation are being subjected to serious harassments, such as threatening phone calls and that the army and police are refusing to cooperate in the clarification of the detainees' whereabouts.

BACKGROUND

For the last eight years Amnesty International has received numerous reports of unacknowledged detentions in Peru, some of which have led to "disappearances". In some cases these detentions are acknowledged after prolonged periods of secret detention and interrogation. Torture is frequently reported during these periods.

During the last few weeks, Amnesty International has received a number of reports of witnesses, lawyers and judges being harassed or attacked, with the direct participation or the acquiescence of members of the army, while trying to investigate human rights violations. The cases include Dr Augusto Zúñiga Paz, lawyer of the Comisión de Derechos Humanos, COMISEDH, the Human Rights Commission in Lima, who received a letter bomb in March 1991 which blew off his left arm. He was investigating the "disappearance" of university student Ernesto Castillo Páez. (See UA 104/91 AI Index: AMR 46/11/91, 19 March 1991 and circular AI Index: AMR 46/05/91, April 1991). Another recent case is that of Dr Moisés Ochoa Girón, judge of Huanta who had his house searched by a large army patrol while investigating army responsibility in the murder of journalist Hugo Bustíos (See UA 195/91, AI Index: AMR 46/27/91, 10 June 1991).