

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/Death threats

21 April 2005

VENEZUELA Isabel Cardozo de Monsalve (f), aged 64
Her family

Isabel Cardozo de Monsalve, whose son was murdered by police, has been receiving death threats since the police officers who killed her son were convicted. Amnesty International is concerned that she and her family are in grave danger.

On 29 March she received several telephone calls, at her house in the city of Maracay, capital of Aragua state, from a man who said he would kill her if she left her house. The threats appear to stem from the conviction of two police officers for the murder of her son, José Miguel Monsalve. He had been arrested by two officers of the Aragua state police *Cuerpo de Seguridad y Orden Público*, Security and Public Order Unit, on 20 May 1999. His body was found in a nearby park later that day: he had been shot twice in the chest and once in the head, and he had been severely beaten.

After a long trial the two police officers were sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment in December 2004. However, despite police claims that they were in custody in a police barracks, they apparently remained at liberty, and were able to carry out police duties.

Isabel Cardozo de Monsalve repeatedly petitioned the relevant authorities to have the two men detained and sent to an appropriate place of detention to serve their sentence. In early April the two men were finally detained and held at a detention centre for police officials. They were later transferred to an *internado judicial*, a pre-trial detention centre in another state.

Isabel Cardozo de Monsalve has filed an official complaint about the telephone death threats with the *Fiscalía Superior*, the Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, in Maracay, and requested police protection. This is the third time since February 2001 that she and her family have had to file an official complaint after receiving death threats, all of which appear to be linked to their struggle for justice for the murder of José Miguel Monsalve. The authorities are not known to have investigated any of these complaints. In early April two members of the *Guardia Nacional* (National Guard) were assigned by the *Fiscalía Superior* to guard the house where she lives with her family, including her two young grandchildren. The protection measures were reportedly supposed to be for a period of thirty days, but the guards were withdrawn after only two days. Despite several complaints by Isabel Cardozo de Monsalve's family to the *Fiscalía Superior*, police protection has not been reinstated.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This is one of the few cases where police officers charged with extrajudicial executions in Aragua State have been convicted. Human rights organizations in the state have documented over 200 such killings in the last few years.

Amnesty International has also documented police intimidation of witnesses and relatives of the victims, and failure to grant them protection. Many Venezuelan states have a similar history of police abuse. Both the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights have intervened in several of these cases, asking the local and national authorities to investigate these crimes and provide protection to those involved. These requests have not generally been properly dealt with.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Isabel Cardozo de Monsalve and her family, who have received death threats;

- urging the authorities to provide her and her family with adequate protection, as they have requested, and to guarantee their safety;
- calling on the authorities to carry out a full, prompt and impartial investigation into all the complaints of death threats and harassment the family have made, to make the results public and bring those responsible to justice.

APPEALS TO:

Governor of Aragua State

Sr. Gobernador del estado de Aragua

Sr. Didalco Bolívar

Palacio de Gobierno

Avenida de Miranda

Maracay

Estado de Aragua, VENEZUELA

Fax: +58 243 2377002 (if a voice answers, say “tono de fax por favor”)

Salutation: Estimado Señor Gobernador/Dear Governor

Attorney General

Fiscal General de la República, Dr. Isaías Rodríguez

Avenida Universidad, Esquina Pele el ojo a Misericordia,

frente a Parque Carabobo, Caracas, VENEZUELA

Fax: + 58 212 576 44 19

Salutation: Estimado Señor Fiscal General/Dear Attorney General

Chief Public Prosecutor of Aragua State

Fiscal Superior del Estado de Aragua, Dra. Olga Adames

Fiscalía Superior del Estado de Aragua

Calle Páez, entre Libertad y Carabobo, Edif. Sede del Ministerio Público

Maracay, Estado de Aragua, VENEZUELA

Fax: + 58 243 2463986

Salutation: Estimada Señora Fiscal Superior (if a voice answers, say “tono de fax por favor”)

COPIES TO:

Aragua State Representative of the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office

Dr. Víctor Orta

Delegado estatal de la Defensoría del Pueblo.

Calle Carabobo Norte, entre Boyacá y Rivas, Residencias Isakaty, P.B., local 2, Maracay

Estado de Aragua, Venezuela

Fax: + 58 243 2472112

+ 58 243 2473436 (if a voice answers, say “tono de fax por favor”)

Human Rights Organization.

Asociación Vida Paz y Libertad

Avenida Bolívar Oeste, Edificio París Piso 3-7, al lado del diario El siglo

Maracay, Estado Aragua, Venezuela

and to diplomatic representatives of Venezuela accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 2 June 2005.