

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 53/03/95  
Distr: UA/SC

UA 59/95

Torture / Fear for safety

7 March 1995

VENEZUELA

Juan Vicente PALMERO - killed  
Kevys Wilfredo PALMERA (14)  
Francisco Javier BELTRAN (17)  
José Alirio DANILA  
Luis BRACCA  
Luis Alberto MACUALO (50), Colombian  
Cruz Antonio MARTINEZ (25)  
Wilson Manuel FAJARDO ACOSTA (22)  
Yonny Alberto SALAZAR BONA (19)  
Yunny Javier SALAZAR BONA (18)  
Seferino RODRIGUEZ (38), Colombian  
Julio Aldemaro ARTAONA (24)  
Francisco Ramón HERNANDEZ (21)  
José Oracio BUSTAMANTE  
Neira Casilda BONA DE SALAZAR (41), female  
Allela CORTES CAMACHO (32), female  
Luis Carlos NAVARRO BONA, Colombian  
Plinio ROMERO MARTINEZ  
Régulo Armando OJEDA  
Marcos Ramón COLMENARES (43)  
Freddy Euclides ROMERO FLORES  
Luis Alberto LARA  
Carlos José VASQUEZ (45), Colombian

---

Fears for the safety of 23 people detained by members of the Venezuelan Navy have been heightened by reports that one of them has been killed and several others tortured in custody.

The arrests took place between 26 February and 3 March, after eight Venezuelan soldiers were reportedly ambushed and killed on 26 February by Colombian guerrillas in the vicinity of Puerto Ayacucho, the capital of the state of Amazonas. Those detained were taken to various locations where they were reportedly tortured: the Navy base in Cararabo, the hacienda *Agua Dulce de la Marina* and the headquarters of the *Comando Ribereño* (Riverside Commando) in Puerto Ayacucho. All the detainees are now being held in Puerto Ayacucho, although their exact whereabouts are not known to Amnesty International.

Juan Vicente Palmero is believed to have been killed by members of the *Infantes de Marina* (Navy Infantry). He was detained together with 14-year-old Kevys Palmera and Francisco Beltrán on 26 February. Reports indicate that they were tortured, as a result of which Kevys Palmera's left leg was fractured in three parts. On 1 March, he and Francisco Beltrán were taken to Puerto Ayacucho.

Other detainees who are reported to have been tortured are Wilson Fajardo, Jonny Salazar, Yunny Salazar and Seferino Rodriguez. Others reportedly subjected to ill-treatment are José Danila, Luis Alberto Macualo, Cruz A. Martínez, Julio Artaona, Francisco Hernández, Luis Navarro, Plinio Romero, Régulo Ojeda, Marcos Colmenares, Freddy Romero, Luis Lara and Carlos Vásquez.

On 5 March, many of the detainees were seen by a local human rights organization.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

On 3 March, the Venezuelan government announced that they had detained 12 Colombian guerrillas who were believed to have taken part in the assault of 26 February. The government has said that these people would be tried under military jurisdiction for their participation in the ambush.

Several constitutional safeguards were suspended by President Rafael Caldera in June 1994 following a serious banking crisis in the country. These included the right not to be arrested or imprisoned unless caught *in flagranti delicto*.

Amnesty International has repeatedly complained to the Venezuelan authorities about the widespread use of torture and ill-treatment, and about the lack of safeguards provided to people held in preventive detention. The organization believes that the principal reason for the persistence of torture in Venezuela is the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in Spanish or in your own language:**

- expressing concern at reports of the torture and ill-treatment by members of the Venezuelan navy of people (naming some) arrested between 26 February and 3 March, and at the reported killing of Juan Vicente Palmero;
- requesting an immediate and impartial investigation into these reports and that those responsible are brought to justice;
- asking that the detainees be given immediate access to doctors, lawyers and their relatives, and seeking assurances that all are now being treated humanely in accordance with international standards;
- asking that they be charged with a recognizably criminal offence or immediately released.

**APPEALS TO**

1) President of the Republic

Dr. Rafael Caldera  
 Presidente de la República  
 Palacio Miraflores  
 Caracas, Venezuela

**Telegrams: Presidente Caldera, Venezuela**

**Telexes: 21161 MIRAF VC**

**Salutation: Sr. Presidente/Dear President**

2) Minister of Defence

Gral. Moisés Orozco  
 Ministro de Defensa Nacional  
 Ministerio de Defensa Nacional  
 Fuerte Tiuna, Conejo Blanco  
 El Valle, Caracas, Venezuela

**Telegrams: Ministro Defensa, Caracas, Venezuela**

**Faxes: + 58 2 662 8829 (if voice, ask: "me podria dar tono de fax?")**

**Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister**

3) Attorney General

Dr. Iván Darío Badell  
 Fiscal General de la República  
 Fiscalía General de la República  
 Manduca a Ferrenquín  
 La Candelaria, Caracas 1011, Venezuela

**Telegrams: Fiscal General, Caracas, Venezuela**

**Telexes: 24787 FISGE VC**

**Salutation: Sr. Fiscal General/Dear Attorney General**

**COPIES TO:**

Human rights organizations

Oficina de los Derechos Humanos

Vicariato Apostolico

Puerto Ayacucho

Amazonas, Venezuela

**Fax: + 58 48 21721**

Programa Venezolano de educacion accion en derechos humanos

Apartado 5156

Caracas 1010-A, Venezuela

**Fax: +58 2 816669**

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 26 April 1995.