

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/Death threats

16 July 2004

VENEZUELA

Caudy Barrios (m), aged 16  
Jorge Barrios (m), aged 15,  
Rigo Barrios (m), aged 16, his brother  
Oneida Barrios (f), mother of Jorge and Rigo ]  
Eloisa Barrios (f) ] Brothers and sisters of  
Inés Barrios (f) ] Narsiso Barrios  
Elvira Barrios (f) ]  
Luis Barrios (m) ]  
Justina Barrios (f), grandmother of Caudy, Rigo and Jorge

**Killed: Narsiso Barrios (m)**

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Police in Aragua state are alleged to have murdered a man and are now harassing and threatening his family. Sixteen-year-old Caudy Barrios, who witnessed the killing, has gone into hiding to escape death threats.

Narsiso Barrios, who managed a bar in the town of Guanayen, was shot dead on 11 December 2003, allegedly by Aragua state police officers. On 30 November, a drunk police officer had started an argument in the bar with Barrios, who struck him. Later that night, police raided four residences belonging to members of the Barrios family, burning down the house of Narsiso's brother Luis. They confiscated anything of value, and warned the family not to report what had happened.

The family have since suffered repeated threats and intimidation, and have been detained by police several times. Narsiso's nephews, 16-year-old Rigo Barrios and his 15-year-old brother Jorge, were detained on 3 March. Police beat them and threatened to kill them, but released them without charge five days later. Caudy Barrios was also detained on 19 June for three days, and treated the same way. Police also fired a gun near his right ear, causing temporary loss of hearing in that ear.

On 5 July the local police chief reportedly called on residents of Guanayen to kill Caudy Barrios if they saw him, *por estar hablando más de la cuenta* ("because he has been talking too much"). Caudy Barrios is now in hiding.

Caudy Barrios has given evidence on his uncle's killing to the local office of the police *Cuerpo de Investigaciones Científicas, Penales y Criminalísticas*, Scientific, Penal and Criminal Investigations Unit in La Villa. The family have also filed official complaints about the harassment and threats with the state Attorney General's Office and the Regional Human Rights Ombudsman, the *Defensoría del Pueblo Regional*. They have asked for protection, without success.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Amnesty International has documented several extrajudicial executions by police in Aragua State, as well as police threats and intimidation against 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 16-year-old Caudy Barrios, who is in hiding in fear for his life, and other members of his family who have been threatened and harassed by Aragua state police;
- urging the authorities to provide him and his 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 the death threats and harassment they have suffered, to make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;
- calling on the authorities to carry out a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the murder of Narsiso Barrios, to make the results public and bring those responsible to justice.

**APPEALS TO:**

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**

Human Rights Ombudsman

Defensoría del Pueblo, Dr. Germán Mundaraín  
Bellas Artes comienzo Avenida México frente al Ateneo de Caracas  
Plaza Morelos, Caracas, VENEZUELA

**Fax: + 58 212 575 4467 (if a voice answers, say "tono de fax por favor")**

**Email: gmundarain@defensoria.gov.ve**

**Salutation: Estimado Señor/Dear Sir**

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: +58 243 237 8843**

**Salutation: Estimado Señor Gobernador/Dear Governor**

Local Police

Comandante de la policía de Aragua, Comisario Angel Mercado (no address available)

**Fax: +58 243 235 1220**

**Salutation: Estimado Señor Comisario/Dear Sir**

**COPIES TO:**

Human Rights Organization.

Comisión de Derechos Humanos de Justicia y Paz del Estado Aragua  
Calle Negro Primero, Oeste  
N 98, frente al Liceo 'Valentin Espinal'

Cruce con Av. Ayacucho, Maracay, Estado Aragua, Venezuela

**Phone/fax: + 58 243 233 6363 (if a voice answers, say "tono de fax por favor")**

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 27 August 2004.