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AI Index: AMR 53/12/99

UA 267/99

Death thre

VENEZUELA **Edgar Humberto Ortiz**
Zaida Hernandez de Arellano (f)

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Edgar Humberto Ortiz and Zaida Hernández de Arellano, who have been threatened with death for denouncing members of the military allegedly responsible for the death of their son during military training.

Nineteen-year-old Johan Alexis Ortiz Hernández died during a field exercise in February 1998 at the National Guard School, *La Escuela de Guardias Nacionales*, in Cordero, Táchira State. His parents have been given contradictory accounts of his death, which officers in charge of the exercise say was an accident, and there have been attempts to conceal evidence from the investigation.

On 30 September, Edgar Humberto Ortiz and Zaida Hernández both received telephone death threats. Two of these calls asked Edgar Humberto Ortiz if he was going to continue with "*la campaña*" (the campaign) and told him that he couldn't go against the *Guardia Nacional*, National Guard. At about 6pm that day, a number of shots were fired at Zaida Hernández's house. The attack is being investigated by the *Policía Técnica Judicial* (PTJ), Technical Judicial Police.

Edgar Humberto Ortiz and Zaida Hernández de Arellano have received a number of death threats during the investigation telling them to "*paren la denuncia y el escándalo con este caso, porque tienen más familia, incluso tienen una niña muy linda que hay que deben cuidar para que no les pase lo mismo*", ("stop the denunciation and the scandal with this case, because you have more family, including a very pretty little girl that you ought to take care of so the same thing doesn't happen to her"). Notes containing death threats have also been left on Edgar Humberto Ortiz's car.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The National Guard is a branch of the army and has been frequently accused of torture and other human rights violations. It provides support in law enforcement duties when required, such as major social disturbances.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Edgar Humberto Ortiz and Zaida Hernández de Arellano, and calling for the authorities to guarantee their safety;
- calling for a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the harassment and attacks on Edgar Humberto Ortiz and Zaida Hernández de Arellano;
- calling for those found to be responsible to be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Justice
Doctor Luis Miquelena
Ministro de Justicia
Ministerio de Justicia
Torre Norte, piso 18
Centro Simón Bolívar
Caracas, Venezuela

Telegrams:Ministro Justicia, Caracas, Venezuela
Fax: + 582 484 9522
Salutation:Señor Ministro

Minister of Defence
General de División (Ej.)
Raúl Salazar Rodríguez
Ministro de Defensa Nacional
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
Fuerte Tiuna, Conejo Blanco
El Valle,
Caracas, Venezuela

Telegrams:Ministro Defensa, Caracas, Venezuela
Fax: + 582 662 4078
Salutation: Señor Ministro

Attorney General of the Republic
Dr.Rafael Pérez Perdoma
Fiscal General de la República
Fiscalía General de la República
Manduca a Ferrenquín
La Candelaria
Caracas 1011, Venezuela

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Caracas, Venezuela
Fax: + 582 564 7461 (If voice answers, ask, "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")
Salutation:Estimado Doctor

COPIES TO:

Support Network for Justice and Peace
Red de Apoyo por la Justicia y Paz
Parque Central
Edif. Caraota,
Nivel 2, Ofic. 220
Caracas, Venezuela
Tel/Fax: + 582 574 8005
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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 15 November 1999.