

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 53/22/97

UA 358/97 Medical concern / Fear of ill-treatment /
Arbitrary detention

14 November 1997

VENEZUELA Francisco Alfredo Tarazona Montañez, doctor, Colombian national

Francisco Alfredo Tarazona Montañez is reported to have been arbitrarily detained on 7 November 1997 in the remote town of Ureña close to the border with Colombia, in the State of Táchira, Venezuela. Amnesty International is concerned for the health and safety of this doctor who is said to suffer from diabetes and a heart condition.

According to press reports, Francisco Tarazona and his wife were seized by eight heavily armed Venezuelan soldiers from the *Guardia Nacional*, National Guard, when they were out shopping. They were taken to a military base where they were interrogated about an incident in which two women had been kidnapped by suspected Colombian subversives. The doctor's wife was released four days later, but to Amnesty International's knowledge, Francisco Alfredo Tarazona Montañez remains detained.

"I don't understand how a man of his age, who is diabetic and suffers from a heart condition, could commit the atrocities which the Venezuelan authorities are wrongly accusing him of", the detainee's brother is reported to have said.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the region of Venezuela that borders Colombia, incursions of Colombian armed opposition groups have led to widespread repression against members of the civilian population suspected of collaborating with such groups. Amnesty International has documented a systematic pattern of torture in this region to extract confessions from suspects and to intimidate detainees.

For example, 16-year-old Jairo A. Carrasquel was beaten after being detained on suspicion of robbery by members of the Judicial Technical Police, *Policía Técnica Judicial (PTJ)*, in Guasdalito in the state of Apure, bordering Colombia, on 12 February 1996. Jairo A. Carrasquel was handcuffed and hung up from one arm, he was repeatedly beaten in the stomach, and a plastic bag was put over his head.

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

- expressing concern at reports that Francisco Alfredo Tarazona Montañez was arbitrarily detained by members of the National Guard on 7 November in Ureña, Táchira, and urging the authorities to conduct an immediate investigation;
- expressing concern for the health of Francisco Tarazona given that he suffers with diabetes and a heart condition and urging that he be given all appropriate medical treatment;
- seeking assurances that he is being protected from any form of ill-treatment in custody;
- calling for his immediate and unconditional release unless promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence.

APPEALS TO:

1) Minister of the Presidency
Doctor Asdrúbal Aguiar
Secretaría de la Presidencia
Palacio de Miraflores
Caracas, Venezuela

Faxes: + 58 2 861 0793
Telegrams: Secretaria de Presidencia, Caracas, Venezuela
Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

2) Minister of the Interior
Dr. José Guillermo Andueza
Ministro de Relaciones Interiores
Ministerio de Relaciones Interiores
Carmelitas a Santa Capilla
Caracas, Venezuela
Telexes: 29694 MRI
Telegrams: Ministro Interiores, Caracas, Venezuela
Faxes: + 58 2 861 1967
Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

3) Attorney General
Dr Iván Darío Badell González
Fiscal General de la República
Esquina de Manduca a Ferrenquín,
Caracas, Venezuela
Faxes: + 58 2 564 7461
Telegrams: Fiscal General, Caracas, Venezuela
Salutation: Sr. Fiscal General / Dear Attorney General

4) Governor of the State of Táchira
Sr. Ricardo Méndez Moreno
Gobernador del Estado Táchira
Palacio de Los Leones
Frente al Parque Sucre
San Cristóbal
Estado Táchira, Venezuela
Telegrams: Gobernador del Estado, San Cristobal, Tachira, Venezuela
Faxes: + 58 7644 9773
Salutation: Sr. Gobernador /Dear Governor

COPIES TO:

1) Human Rights Organization
Sres., Red de Apoyo por la Justicia y la Paz
Apartado Postal No.17.476.
Parque Central
Caracas 1015-A
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 29 December 1997.