
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 100/94

TO: PRESS OFFICERS
FROM: IS PRESS OFFICE
DATE: 13 MAY 1994

NO OF WORDS:1666

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DISTR: SC/PO

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VENEZUELA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL VISIT

An Amnesty International delegation will visit Venezuela between 14 May and 3 June. The delegation plans to meet members of the new government, including President Rafael Caldera, to discuss the organization's concerns about ongoing human rights violations in that country.

Amnesty International has continued to receive reports about the widespread use of torture and ill-treatment by the security forces; extra-judicial executions by the police and the army; the use of the Law of Vagrants and Crooks, under which people can be imprisoned without trial for up to five years; and appalling prison conditions, which commonly amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

The organization believes that the impunity granted to most of the perpetrators of such violations is one of the key elements which need to be tackled to put an effective end to such abuses.

For example, among the scores of people deliberately and arbitrarily killed by the security forces was Luis Enrique Landa Diaz, a 21-year-old medical student murdered by members of the National Guard during a peaceful demonstration in Aragua, in September 1992. Despite immense efforts by his family, and a long lasting campaign to seek justice, his murderers remain unpunished.

Also, most of those responsible for the massacres of prisoners in Caracas in November 1992 and in Maracaibo in January 1994 have not been brought to justice, and dozens of prisoners continue to be killed monthly in Venezuelan prisons as a result of the lack of effective action to stop such killings.

Amnesty International's three-member delegation will be composed by Morris Tidball Binz, Amnesty International's researcher responsible for Venezuela, Javier Zúñiga, Program Director for the Americas, and Dr. José Antonio Martín Pallín, a member of the Spanish Supreme Court who will participate as special delegate for Amnesty International.

The delegation visited Venezuela in October and November 1993, to launch a campaign and the report, Venezuela: The Eclipse of human rights, and held meetings with the authorities and those participating in the presidential elections of December 1993.

Amnesty International has prepared a list of more than 70 recommendations which the organization believes need to be implemented in order to ensure full respect for human rights in Venezuela. The delegation hopes to discuss the implementation of these measures with the new authorities who have announced their willingness to adopt effective measures to stop abuses there.

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DELEGACION DE AMNISTIA INTERNACIONAL VISITA VENEZUELA

Una delegación de Amnistía Internacional visitará Venezuela entre el 14 de mayo y el 3 de junio venideros. Entre sus objetivos se encuentra el mantener reuniones con las nuevas autoridades, incluyendo al Presidente Rafael Caldera, a fin de hacer llegar las preocupaciones de la organización sobre violaciones a los derechos humanos en ese país.

Amnistía Internacional ha seguido recibiendo informes sobre el uso extendido de la tortura y los malos tratos por parte de las fuerzas de seguridad; ejecuciones sumarias por parte de la policía y el ejército; la persistente aplicación de la Ley de Vagos y Malerantes, bajo la cual cualquier individuo puede ser enviado a prisión sin juicio, por un período de hasta cinco años; y sobre las condiciones inhumanas y degradantes de las cárceles venezolanas.

La organización cree que la impunidad de la que se benefician la mayoría de los responsables de tales violaciones es uno de los principales elementos que garantizan su perpetuación. Por ejemplo, entre las docenas de asesinados por las fuerzas de seguridad figura Luis Enrique Landa Díaz, un estudiante de medicina de 21 años asesinado durante una manifestación pacífica en Maracay en septiembre de 1992. A pesar del enorme esfuerzo de su familia para exigir justicia, y de una campaña internacional a su favor, los homicidas de Luis Landa continúan impunes. Asimismo, la mayoría de los responsables de las masacres de presos ocurridas en Noviembre de 1992, en Caracas, y en enero de 1994, en Maracaibo, no han sido llevados ante la justicia. Mientras tanto, docenas de presos mueren asesinados mensualmente en las cárceles venezolanas debido a la falta de medidas efectivas para prevenir la violencia desatada por las terribles condiciones en las que viven los presos.

La delegación de Amnistía Internacional estará compuesta por Morris Tidball Binz, investigador de la organización encargado para Venezuela; Javier Zúñiga, Director de Programas para las Américas, y el Dr. José Antonio Martín Pallín, miembro del máximo tribunal de justicia de España, quien participará en calidad de delegado especial para Amnistía Internacional. Los tres visitaron Venezuela en octubre y noviembre de 1993, en ocasión del lanzamiento del informe de Amnistía Internacional Venezuela: El eclipse de los derechos humanos, y de una campaña de la organización por Venezuela. Durante dicha visita mantuvieron reuniones con diversas autoridades y con representantes de los principales contendientes en las elecciones presidenciales de diciembre de 1993.

Amnistía Internacional ha preparado una lista con más de 70 recomendaciones que la organización estima deberían implementarse a fin de garantizar el pleno respeto a los derechos humanos de toda la población venezolana. La delegación espera conversar sobre la puesta en práctica de estas recomendaciones con las nuevas autoridades, las cuales han expresado su interés en poner fin a las violaciones a los derechos humanos en Venezuela.

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EGYPT: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONCERNED ABOUT THE DEATH OF A DETAINED LAWYER

Amnesty International was concerned to learn early this week of the death of 'Abd al-Haris Mohammad Madani, a 32-year-old lawyer, reportedly following torture by Egyptian security police.

An Amnesty International representative briefly met with 'Abd al-Haris Mohammad Madani on 24 April while visiting Egypt, arranging for a further interview that week. When 'Abd al-Haris Mohammad Madani failed to turn up, subsequent inquiries revealed that he had been arrested on 26 April 1994 in his office in Cairo and allegedly so severely tortured at the Giza branch of the State Security Intelligence (SSI) that he had to be transferred to Qasr al-'Aini hospital. There he was confined to 'Anbar al-Mu'taqaleen (detainees' wing), where he and other sick or injured detainees had no access to the outside world.

"The methods of torture used on 'Abd al-Haris Mohammad Madani are reported to have included electric shocks applied to his body, beating and whipping", Amnesty International said. "His family reportedly learned of his death on Friday 6 May, when ordered to collect his body from a morgue".

'Abd al-Haris Mohammad Madani defended many Islamist political prisoners. He had been arrested previously and on one occasion several members of his family, including his mother, were detained by security police.

Thousands of lawyers reportedly met at the headquarters of the Bar Association in Cairo on Tuesday 10 May to protest at the death of their colleague. A number of lawyers and the Medical Syndicate lodged a complaint with the Public Prosecutor Raga' al-'Arabi on 7 May calling for an independent autopsy and requesting to be present at the entire investigation. However, the Public Prosecutor allegedly refused their demands and reportedly told them they had no right to be present at the investigation.

The Minister of Interior, General Hassan al-Alfi, is reported as stating that "the man died of an attack of asthma and it has nothing to do with torture and I am not going to say any more about it." However, according to a report of 12 May, the Public Prosecutor, "has confirmed that the death was the result of foul play and has authorized the lawyer's family to file a civil suit against the police."

Amnesty International has called on the Head of the Human Rights Unit within the Procuracy, established in November 1993, to set up a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation into the circumstances surrounding 'Abd al-Haris Mohammad Madani's death. The organization also urged that both the procedures followed and the findings of such investigation be made public and that if the reports that 'Abd al-Haris Mohammad Madani died as a result of torture are established as true, the perpetrators be brought to justice. The organization drew attention to the requirements of the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which Egypt ratified in 1986, that any state ratifying the convention should:

"ensure that its competent authorities proceed to a prompt and impartial investigation, wherever there is a reasonable ground to believe that an act of torture has been committed in any territory under its jurisdiction." (Article 12).

Amnesty International has also requested assurances that the following points would be included in the investigation:

- 1 Interviews with the officers alleged to have inflicted the torture, if they can be identified;
- 2 Interviews with any authorities who came into contact with 'Abd al-Haris Mohammad Madani after the arrest, including the arresting officers and all officers involved in interrogating him;

3 Interviews with any witnesses to the victim's physical condition at the time of arrest and afterwards, and to the alleged torture;

4 Examination of all relevant police records indicating the time and place of arrest and accounting for the victim's whereabouts between arrest and being transferred to Qasr al-'Aini hospital;

5 Interviews with the hospital medical staff who examined 'Abd al-Haris Mohammad Madani, and study of the record of the first medical examination after the victim's arrival in hospital and all subsequent medical examinations.

Amnesty International regards this case with very serious concern. In the light of the repeated assurances it has received from the Egyptian Government that torture complaints are investigated, Amnesty International has requested detailed information regarding this case, including a copy of the report by medical doctors who examined the body of 'Abd al-Haris Mohammad Madani.

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