

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 18/01/98

UA 40/98

Fear of Safety

10 February 1998

BOLIVIA

Dr Waldo ALBARRACIN, lawyer, human rights defender
Dr ALBARRACIN's family

There is serious concern for the safety of Dr Waldo Albarracín, president of The *Asamblea Permanente de Derechos Humanos*, Permanent Human Rights Assembly - a leading Bolivian non-governmental human rights organization - and candidate for the position of Ombudsman. There is also concern for his family who have been subjected to a new wave of death threats in recent days.

On 5 February 1998, Waldo Albarracín and his two children reportedly received separate anonymous telephone death threats. One threatening call was directed to Waldo Albarracín at his home and the other to his children at their school.

Waldo Albarracín has denounced the threats to the national media and the authorities. These threats come only a few days after his nomination, by human rights and popular organizations, as a candidate for Ombudsman, and during the week when parliamentary sessions commence to consider a report outlining a previous attack against him.

Amnesty International believes that the death threats and harassment directed at Waldo Albarracín and his family are related to his active work as an outspoken defender of human rights.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In January 1997 Waldo Albarracín was abducted and tortured by members of the Bolivian Police. Following his release Waldo Albarracín was targeted with a series of acts of harassment, including death threats (see UA 27/97, 28 January 1997, AMR 18/02/97 and follow-ups: 21 February 1997, AMR 18/04/97; 19 March 1997, AMR 18/06/97; 14 April 1997, AMR 18/07/97; 12 September 1997, AMR 18/11/97; and "Bolivia: Undermining Human Rights Work" AI Index AMR 18/10/97, May 1997). The Albarracín family were later forced to abandon their home as a result of death threats and continued harassment.

Following national and international reaction to this incident, the *Comisión de Constitución, Justicia y Policía Judicial de la Honorable Cámara de Diputados*, Commission of Constitution, Justice and Judicial Police of the Chamber of Deputies, initiated an investigation. The report resulting from these investigations went to the Plenary of the Chamber of Deputies on 4 February for consideration. A new parliamentary session on the report is scheduled for Wednesday 11 February. Pending approval of the report by the Chamber of Deputies, legal proceedings against those involved in the attack against Waldo Albarracín could be initiated.

Amnesty International is closely monitoring developments in relation to the bringing to justice of those responsible for the abduction and torture of Dr Albarracín.

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

- expressing concern that Dr Albarracín and members of his family received death threats on 5 February 1998;
- calling for effective measures to protect the physical integrity of the Albarracín family;
- asking the authorities to thoroughly investigate this and previous incidents of harassment, make public the method and outcome of the investigation, and urging that those found responsible be brought to justice;
- noting the Parliamentary consideration of the report on the investigation about Waldo Albarracín's abduction and torture in January 1997.

APPEALS TO:

President

Excmo Sr. Presidente
Gral. Hugo Banzer
Palacio de Gobierno
La Paz, Bolivia

Telegrams: Presidente, La Paz, Bolivia

Faxes: + 5912 391216 (if voice, ask "me puede dar tono de fax por favor")

Salutation: Sr. Presidente / Dear President

Minister of Government

Sr. Ministro de Gobierno
Sr. Guido Nayar
Ministerio de Gobierno
Av. Arce esq. Belisario Salinas
La Paz, Bolivia

Telegrams: Ministro Gobierno, La Paz, Bolivia

Faxes: + 5912 371334

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

President of Congress

President Congress
Sr. Jorge Quiroga Ramírez
Palacio Legislativo
Plaza Murillo,
La Paz, Bolivia

Telegrams: Presidente, Congress, La Paz, Bolivia

Faxes: + 5912 392178 (if voice, ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Honorable Presidente / Dear President

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Organization

Asamblea Permanente de Derechos Humanos
Cajón Postal 9282
La Paz, Bolivia

Faxes: + 5912 327761/ 365148 (if voice, ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

and to diplomatic representatives of Bolivia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 24 March 1998.