

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 18/001/2001

UA 51/01

Fear for Safety / Death Threats

8 March 2001

BOLIVIA

Dr Waldo Albarracín, human rights defender
His family

An anonymous caller has threatened to kill the president of a leading human rights organization, Waldo Albarracín. Amnesty International believes he and his family are in grave danger.

Waldo Albarracín, who is a lawyer and university lecturer, is the president of the Bolivian Permanent Human Rights Assembly, *Asamblea Permanente de Derechos Humanos de Bolivia* (APDH). The threatening phone calls were made to his home number.

On 22 February 16-year-old Rodrigo Albarracín answered the telephone and was told that his father had been "sentenced to death".

The APDH reported the death threat to the Chamber of Deputies Human Rights Commission, The Human Rights Ombudsman's Office, the Minister of Justice and Human Rights and the Minister of Government, asking for a full investigation. The Ministry of Government replied that they had no further information about the matter.

When Waldo Albarracín's wife, Sonia Vallejos, answered the telephone on 28 February she was told that it was Waldo Albarracín's "second warning," and that the death threat applied to the whole family. When she answered a third call on 5 March she recognised the same voice, saying that Waldo Albarracín was getting a "third warning".

Amnesty International believes that these threats are connected with his human rights work.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In January 1997 Waldo Albarracín was abducted by members of the police in the capital, La Paz. They held him prisoner for several hours, keeping him blindfolded while they beat him and threatened to kill him. He was eventually left in the Police Headquarters. No formal charges have been brought against the officers involved.

Waldo Albarracín has been threatened repeatedly because of his human rights work. He and his family have been the subject of six Urgent Actions and follow-ups since January 1997, but the authorities have consistently failed to investigate the threats.

In August 2000 the APDH Legal Affairs Secretary (*Secretario de Asuntos Jurídicos*), Sacha Llorentti, received two death threats on his mobile phone, telling him that "his days were numbered" (see UA 238/00, AMR 18/10/00, 10 August 2000). In 1999, the president of the APDH in Santa Cruz, Aldalberto Rojas, also received phone threats, and their office was broken into and their computer destroyed.

For more details of the kidnaping and assault on Dr Waldo Albarracín, see the external document *Bolivia: Undermining human rights work*, AI Index AMR 18/10/97, May 1997.)

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

- expressing concern that Waldo Albarracín and his family received telephone death threats on 22 February, 28 February and 5 March 2001;
- asking the authorities to take action immediately to ensure that Waldo Albarracín and his family are effectively protected, so that he can continue with his legitimate human rights work;
- asking the authorities to order a prompt, full and impartial investigation into these death threats, to publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- urging the authorities to publicly repudiate all harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders, and to publicly recognize the important contribution that human rights defenders make to the protection of human rights and the promotion of a society which fully respects human rights.

APPEALS TO:

President

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

Telegrams: Presidente, La Paz, Bolivia

Faxes: + 5912 391216 / 392606 (if voice, ask "me puede dar tono de fax por favor")

Salutation: Sr. Presidente/ Dear President

Minister of Government

Ministro de Gobierno
 Sr. Guillermo Fortún
 Ministerio de Gobierno
 Av. Arce esq. Belisario Salinas
 La Paz, Bolivia

Telegrams: Ministro Gobierno, La Paz, Bolivia

Faxes: + 5912 442 589

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/ Dear Minister

Minister of Justice

Ministro de Justicia y Derechos Humanos
 Dr. Luis Vázquez
 Ministerio de Justicia
 Avenida 16 de Julio (El Prado), 1769
 La Paz, Bolivia

Telegrams: Ministro Justicia, La Paz, Bolivia

Faxes: + 5912 392 982

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/ Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Organization

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

Human Rights Ombudsman

Defensoría del Pueblo, Casilla 10928, La Paz, Bolivia

Newspaper

Presencia, Av. Mariscal Santa Cruz 2150, La Paz, Bolivia

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 19 April 2001.