

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 18/02/97

UA 27/97

Fear for safety

28 January 1997

BOLIVIA

Dr Waldo Albarracín, human rights defender

Amnesty International is deeply concerned at reports that Dr Waldo Albarracín was abducted and tortured in La Paz by eight policemen on 25 January 1997. Dr Albarracín is now receiving medical treatment in hospital. Amnesty International believes that the incident is connected with Dr Albarracín's public declarations on human rights issues, and fears that he may continue to be at risk of attack as a result of his work as a human rights defender.

Dr Waldo Albarracín is President of the *Asamblea Permanente de Derechos Humanos*, Permanent Human Rights Assembly, a non-governmental human rights organization. At 11.30 am on 25 January 1997 the public transport vehicle in which he was travelling was intercepted by a van, and Dr Albarracín was forced out of the vehicle by eight men in plain clothes. He was blindfolded and driven to an unknown location where he was beaten about the head, ears and testicles for several hours, and was told that he would be killed.

At around 3.30 pm on 25 January 1997 Dr Waldo Albarracín was taken to the headquarters of the *Policía Técnica Judicial*, Judicial Police, in La Paz and placed in a cell. The department police commander subsequently ordered his transfer to a police hospital. Fearing that he remained at risk there, his family arranged for him to be moved to a private hospital where he is currently being treated for bruising and a cracked rib.

Dr Waldo Albarracín has been presented with an arrest warrant. Amnesty International believes that any charges he may face could be related to recent declarations he made about an incident on 22 December 1996 in which nine people, including a police colonel, died in clashes between miners and police in Amayapampa, Potosí Department. Dr Albarracín has publicly called for a full investigation into all the deaths.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The *Asamblea Permanente de Derechos Humanos* is a leading Bolivian human rights organization which was founded in 1976. Dr Waldo Albarracín has been its president for six years, and an outspoken defender of human rights. In May 1996, Dr Waldo Albarracín was a delegate at an international conference on the protection of human rights defenders organized by Amnesty International and held in Bogotá, Colombia.

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

- expressing deep concern at the abduction and torture of Dr Waldo Albarracín, carried out by members of the police;
- urging the Bolivian authorities to take steps to guarantee the safety of Dr Waldo Albarracín;
- calling for an immediate suspension from duty of any members of the police suspected of involvement in the abduction and torture of Dr Waldo Albarracín, pending a full and independent inquiry;
- urging that the findings of the inquiry be made public, and that those responsible be brought to justice;

- asking for details of any charges against Dr Waldo Albarracín.

APPEALS TO:

President

Excmo Sr. Presidente
Lic. Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada
Palacio de Gobierno
La Paz, Bolivia
Telegrams: Excmo. Sr. Presidente, La Paz, Bolivia
Faxes: +5912 391216
Salutation: Mr President/Señor Presidente

Minister of Government

Sr. Ministro de Gobierno
Dr. Carlos Sánchez Berzaín
Av. Arce esq. Belisario Salinas
La Paz, Bolivia
Telegrams: Sr. Ministro de Gobierno, La Paz, Bolivia
Faxes: +5912 371334
Salutation: Dear Minister/Señor Ministro

Minister of Justice

Sr. Ministro de Justicia
Dr. Raul España Smith
Ministerio de Justicia
Palacio de Comunicaciones Piso 6,
Avenida Mariscal Santa Cruz
La Paz, Bolivia
Telegrams: Sr. Ministro Justicia, La Paz, Bolivia
Faxes: +59 12 356530
Salutation: Dear Minister, Señor Ministro

COPIES TO:

National newspaper

Presencia
Jefe de redacción, Sr. Pedro Glasinovich
Avenida Mariscal Santa Cruz No. 2150
Casilla de Correo 3276
La Paz, Bolivia
Faxes: +59 12 39140

Human Rights Organization

Asamblea Permanente
de Derechos Humanos
Cajón Postal 9282
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 11 March 1997.