

UA 168/02

Death Threats/Fear for safety

5 June 2002

ECUADOR

Luis Villacís Maldonado, member of Parliament and Presidential candidate for the Democratic Popular movement (MPD)

Stalin Vargas Meza, MPD member of Parliament

Gustavo Terán Acosta, MPD national representative

Ciro Guzmán Aldaz, MPD national representative

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Senior members of the opposition party *Movimiento Popular Democrático* (MPD), Democratic Popular Movement, are receiving death threats, and Amnesty International believes they are in danger. The party has been very critical of the government, and two of its parliamentarians were shot dead in 1999 in unclear circumstances.

MPD member of parliament Stalin Vargas Meza received an anonymous phone call on 20 May from a man who said: "Stalín son of a bitch, we are going to kill you." ("*Stalín hijo de puta te vamos a matar*"). The call was reportedly made from a public telephone box in an office building in the capital, Quito.

MPD national representative *Ciro Guzmán Aldaz* received an anonymous phone call the same day, in which he was told: "You are going to die, mother fucker" ("*... se van a morir, chucha de su madre*"). Later that day he received two more phone calls, in which the caller did not speak at all. The phone calls were allegedly made from a company in Quito. An employee of the company denied that anyone had used the phone to call *Ciro Guzman*.

MPD member of parliament *Luis Villacís Maldonado*, who will be running for President in three months' time, has received similar phone calls, as has MPD national representative *Gustavo Terán Acosta*. The calls to both men were reportedly made from the same telephone.

The four MPD members sent a letter to the Ministry of Interior reporting these threats on 28 May. They have not yet received any response.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The MPD is an outspoken critic of the current government, which it accuses of corruption and economic policies which have led to increased poverty in the country.

The death threats described above have taken place in the run-up to the elections for President, due to take place in September. They appear to be part of a pattern of intimidation and threats against human rights organizations, civil society leaders and critics of the government. This appears to have started in July 2001, when a group called *Legión Blanca* started an e-mail campaign of intimidation and threats (see UA 189/01, AMR 28/017/2001, 26 July, and follow-up, AMR 28/018/01, 2 August). The first e-mail sent by the group named *Luis Villacís* and accused him and other trade unionists and members of left-wing political parties of being "criminals" and serving Cuban interests.

MPD parliamentarians *Jaime Hurtado Gonzalez* and *Pablo Vicente Tapia Farinango* were shot dead near the National Congress in Quito on 17 February

1999, together with another man, Wellington Borja Nazareno. The gunman reportedly escaped in a waiting vehicle.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish, English or your own language:**

- expressing concern for the people named above;
- asking the authorities to do everything necessary to protect them, so they can continue their legitimate activities in safety;
- calling for an immediate investigation into the alleged death threats, the findings made public and those responsible brought to justice.

**APPEALS TO: Please note that it can be difficult getting through to fax numbers in Ecuador. Please be patient and keep trying. If a voice answers, ask "Por favor, me puede dar tono de fax."**

Minister of the Interior and Police

Dr. Juan Manrique Martínez  
Ministerio de Gobierno y Policía  
Benalcázar y Espejo  
Quito  
ECUADOR

**Fax: + 593 258 3966**

**Telegram: Ministerio de Gobierno, Quito, Ecuador**

**Salutation: Señor Ministro/Dear Minister**

Congressional Human Rights Commission

Dr. Bolívar Sánchez Ribadeneira  
Presidente de la Comisión Especializada  
Permanente de Derechos Humanos  
del H. Congreso Nacional  
Luis Saá y Sodiro  
Edificación Daniel Cadena, 1º Piso, oficina 108  
Quito  
Ecuador

**Fax: + 593 2 2504 295**

**Salutation: Señor Presidente**

**COPIES TO:**

Human Rights Organization

Centro de Documentación en Derechos Humanos  
"Segundo Montes Mozo S.J."  
Nicolás Jiménez, 5º piso, E 4, 223  
Av. 12 de Octubre  
Quito, Ecuador

and to diplomatic representatives of Ecuador accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.**