

INTERNAL

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To : Medical professionals

From: Medical Office / Research Department - Americas

Date: 20 August 1990

MEDICAL LETTER-WRITING ACTION

Rubén OROPEZA Hurtado
MEXICO

Keywords:

Theme: ill-treatment/medical care/torture.

Summary

Rubén Oropeza Hurtado, a 39 year-old inmate of La Mesa State Penitentiary, sustained a complicated diaphragmatic hernia allegedly as a result of torture by agents of the Federal Judicial Police. He is described as being in a delicate state and there are fears that post-operative medical care in Tijuana will not be adequate. AI is urging the investigation of the torture allegations and that the prisoner be provided with necessary medical care as a matter of urgency.

Recommended Actions

Please send courteously worded appeals, preferably in Spanish:

- expressing serious concern that Rubén Oropeza's current medical condition may be a result of torture by members of the Federal Judicial Police;
- urging that a full and impartial investigation be immediately carried out into allegations that he was tortured following his arrest and that those responsible be held accountable under the law;
- acknowledging the fact that members of the National Commission for Human Rights have recently visited Tijuana in order to look into allegations of torture against prisoners held in La Mesa State Penitentiary and to arrange for medical attention for Rubén Oropeza;
- expressing concern that despite the efforts of the National Commission for Human Rights and local authorities, medical facilities currently available for the patient are said to be insufficient and urging that proper medical care for Rubén Oropeza be immediately provided;

Addresses [See next page]

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EXTERNAL

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MEDICAL CONCERN**Rubén OROPEZA Hurtado
MEXICO**

Amnesty International has received reports that Rubén Oropeza Hurtado, a 39-year-old inmate of La Mesa State Penitentiary in Tijuana, in the state of Baja California del Norte, is in a critical post-operative condition after a major resection of the gut by doctors of the Mexican Red Cross delegation.

Rubén Oropeza, who has been hospitalized since 14 July 1990, was arrested without warrant and allegedly beaten and tortured three months ago by agents of the Policía Judicial Federal (PJF - Federal Judicial Police) in Tijuana. According to reports from local human rights organizations, he was falsely imprisoned on drug charges.

Oropeza declared that he received very forceful kicks and blows to the abdomen from agents of the PJF after his arrest. According to doctors, he developed a diaphragmatic hernia as a result of blows to the abdomen. He was admitted to the local Red Cross Clinic on 14 July 1990, presenting acute abdominal pain and respiratory distress with a diagnosis of an acute surgical abdomen and underwent surgery the same day.

Members of the Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos (National Commission for Human Rights), set up in June by President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, recently visited Tijuana following allegations of torture by many of the inmates, more than 60 of whom recently declared a hunger-strike protesting that they had been tortured following their arrest by members of the PJF and illegally imprisoned. They also examined the case of Rubén Oropeza and made provisions for him to receive emergency treatment. Reports indicate, however, that medical facilities in Tijuana are not optimal for the adequate post-operative care of a case of this nature.

Surgical findings and treatment:

Examination revealed a complicated diaphragmatic hernia secondary to traumatic rupture of diaphragm with total necrosis of the small intestine and part of the large intestine, including ascending, transverse and half of the descending colon; total collapse of the left lung and collection of purulent material in the left hemithorax.

Surgery included the following : right hemicolectomy including proximal half of descending colon; total resection of the small intestine; closure of diaphragmatic defect; temporary duodenostomy and mucosal

fistulae of ascending colon; cleaning and drainage of cavities. A left pleural drainage outlet was connected.

Post-surgical evolution and prognosis were described as "bad" and "reserved" respectively.

Oropeza is currently in the intensive care unit of the local Red Cross clinic and is receiving total parenteral feeding. His condition is described as delicate and prognosis is reserved. He remains in a critical state.