

PUBLIC

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UA 172/02

Fear for safety/Death Threats

11 June 2002

PARAGUAY

María Noguera (f) and her family

María Noguera, who's son Vicente Ariel Noguera was 17 years old when he died during military service, is the president of the *Asociación de Familiares de Víctimas del Servicio Militar Obligatorio* (AFAVISEM), Association of Relatives of Victims of Obligatory Military Service. She has received threatening telephone calls and her house is allegedly being watched, causing concerns for her safety and that of her family.

María Noguera is also a member of an inter-governmental commission investigating abuses of conscripts. On 17 May, she went to the military hospital, to obtain the testimony of a young conscript who had reportedly been sexually abused at the Curuguaty barracks, in the department of Canindiyú, approximately 600km from Asunción.

On 19 May, at 10am she answered a telephone call in which a man reportedly said "Do not involve General Quiñonez...and Coronel García who runs the barracks, he likes to shoot", "*No le involucre al general Quiñonez... y que el coronel García es el que manda en el cuartel y le gustan los tiros*". The man added "... your 16 year old son, is now big enough and handsome enough to go to the barracks and if he goes to Curuguaty, he has to take a lot of care because the route to Curuguaty is very nasty", "*...su hijo, de 16 años, ya está nuevamente grande y lindo para ir al cuartel y si va a ir a Curuguaty que se cuide bien porque el camino es muy feo*".

In the last few days, the threatening phone calls have continued, as has the presence of unidentified individuals who appear to be watching her house.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The *Asociación de Familiares de Víctimas del Servicio Militar Obligatorio* (AFAVISEM), Association of Relatives of Victims of Obligatory Military Service has repeatedly denounced the Paraguayan authorities for its failure to fully investigate the deaths of more than 100 adolescent conscripts since 1990. It has criticized the government for conducting investigations which lack transparency and which do not allow the parents of dead soldiers to take part directly. AFAVISEM has also sought to draw attention to the inadequate conditions in which conscripts carry out their military service. This includes a failure to meet basic needs such as providing food, beds, medical attention, medicines, and dentists.

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

- urging the authorities to take appropriate measures to guarantee the safety of María Noguera and her family, so that she can continue her legitimate work for the defence and promotion of human rights;
- calling for an immediate, impartial and full investigation into the reported threats against María Noguera and her family and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- urging the government to adhere to the principles of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental

Freedoms, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 9 December 1998;

- reminding the authorities that in recognition of the important role human rights defenders play in promoting human rights throughout the Americas, the General Assembly of the Organization of American States adopted on 4 June resolution AG/RES. 1842 (XXXII-O/02) "Human Rights Defenders in the Americas: Support for the individuals, groups, and organisations of civil society working to promote and protect human rights in the Americas", urging states to take several steps to promote and protect the work of human rights activists.

APPEALS TO:

President of Paraguay

Señor Presidente Luis Angel González Macchi,
Presidente de Paraguay,
Palacio de Gobierno,
El Paraguayo Independiente entre Ayolas y O' Leary,
CP 1220, Asunción. Paraguav

Telegram: President González Macchi, Asunción, Paraguay

Fax: + 595 21 497 388

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President

Minister of Interior

Sr. Francisco Oviedo
Ministro de Interior, Ministerio del Interior,
Chile y Manduvira,
Asunción, Paraguay

Telegram: Ministro de Interior, Asunción, Paraguay

Fax: + 595 21 446 448

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/ Dear Minister

Human Rights Ombudsman

Sr. Manuel María Paez Monges
Defensor del Pueblo,
Defensoria del Pueblo,
14 de Mayo y El Paraguayo Independiente,
Asunción, Paraguav

Telegram: Defensor del Pueblo, Asunción, Paraguay

Fax: + 595 21 497 394

Salutation: Estimado Sr./Dear Sir

COPIES TO:

Association of Relatives of Victims of Obligatory Military Service.

AFAVISEM

Calle Roma(ex Cuarta) 922 (Casi entre Montevideo y Colón)

Asunción

Paraguay

and to diplomatic representatives of Paraguay accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 23 July 2002.