

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety

4 October 1999

BOLIVIA

**Dr Waldo Albarracín, lawyer, human rights defender
His family**

Amnesty International is extremely concerned for the safety of Dr Waldo Albarracín and his family. Dr Albarracín, a prominent human rights activist and president of the organization *Asamblea Permanente de Derechos Humanos de Bolivia*, Bolivian Permanent Human Rights Assembly, was abducted and tortured by police officers in January 1997. He and his family have been receiving death threats connected with the prosecution of a number of the police officers involved.

On 24 September 1999 the police officers charged with torturing Dr Albarracín were due to appear at a hearing at the 10th Criminal Court [*Juzgado Décimo de Instrucción en lo Penal*] in the capital, La Paz. That day the family received an anonymous telephone call. The caller asked for Dr Albarracín's nine-year-old son by name, and referred to the killing and rape of a girl which had occurred a few days earlier, clearly implying a death threat.

On 29 September the *Asamblea Permanente de Derechos Humanos de Bolivia* wrote to Bolivia's Minister of Government (*Ministro de Gobierno*), Walter Guiteras Dennis, denouncing the most recent threats and calling for steps to guarantee Dr Albarracín and his family's safety. This was the latest in a series of communications sent by the *Asamblea* to the minister on the same issue this year. Despite repeated calls by Amnesty International and other human rights organizations, previous death threats to Waldo Albarracín and his family have not been investigated. Moreover, three of the police officers charged with Dr Albarracín's abduction and torture remain in active service, despite the fact that under Article 12 of the Bolivian Constitution (*Constitución Política del Estado*) any person involved in torture should be suspended from duty immediately.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Dr Waldo Albarracín was abducted on 25 January 1997 by eight police officers and subjected to several hours of beatings and death threats. Amnesty International believes that his abduction and torture was connected with his human rights work. Since then Dr Albarracín and his family have been subjected to death threats and intimidation, and were eventually forced to move home.

The United Nations Human Rights Commission has repeatedly emphasized the importance of taking serious steps against impunity. In particular it has recommended that members of the security forces involved in human rights violations should be suspended from active duty while judicial investigations are carried out, and that the suspension should continue until investigations are completed.

Dr Albarracín and his family have been the subject of a number of Urgent Actions (see UA 27/97, 28 January 1997, AMR 18/02/97 and follow-ups: 21 February 1997, AMR 18/04/97; 19 March 1997, AMR 18/06/97; 14 April 1997, AMR 18/07/97; 12 September 1997, AMR 18/11/97; UA 40/98, 10 February 1998, AMR 18/01/98; and 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, if fluent, or in your own language:

- expressing concern at the latest death threats against Dr Waldo Albarracín and his family;
- calling for immediate steps to guarantee effective protection for Dr Waldo Albarracín and his family: this protection should allow Dr Albarracín to continue his human rights work;
- calling for thorough and impartial investigations into these latest threats, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- asking what steps have been taken by the authorities to investigate previous threats against Dr Albarracín and his family;
- expressing concern that some of the police officers charged with Dr Albarracín's abduction and torture continue in active service;
- calling for the immediate suspension from duty of any member of the security forces implicated in human rights violations pending the completion of a full and impartial investigation.

APPEALS TO:

President

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

Telegrams: Presidente, La Paz, Bolivia

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

Salutation: Sr. Presidente/ Dear President

Minister of Government

Sr. Ministro de Gobierno
 Sr. Walter Guiteras Dennis
 Ministerio de Gobierno
 Av. Arce esq. Belisario Salinas
 La Paz, Bolivia

Telegrams: Ministro Gobierno, La Paz, Bolivia

Faxes: + 5912 371352/ 371334

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/ Dear Minister

Minister of Justice

Sr. Ministro de Justicia
 Sr. Juan Chahin
 Ministerio de Justicia
 Palacio de Comunicaciones Piso 6.
 Avenida Mariscal Santa Cruz
 La Paz, Bolivia

Telegrams: Ministro Justicia, La Paz, Bolivia

Faxes: + 5912 356530

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/ Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Sr. Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto
 Dr Javier Murillo de la Rocha
 Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto
 La Paz, Bolivia

Fax: + 59 12 371155

Human Rights Organization

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

Faxes: + 5912 335715

Newspaper

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

Faxes: + 5912 391040

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 15 November 1999.