

EXTERNAL

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Torture / Fear for safety

20 November 1995

PARAGUAY

César BARRIOS, conscientious objector

In the fourth such case in Paraguay this year, a conscientious objector has been abducted and tortured. The latest victim, César Barrios, a member of the *Movimiento de Objeción de Conciencia* (MOC), Conscientious Objection Movement, managed to escape from the soldiers who abducted him, but Amnesty International remains seriously concerned for his safety and for the safety of other members of the MOC, about whom César Barrios was questioned by his captors.

On 4 November 1995 César Barrios was travelling to the town of Pirapey, department of Itapua, to attend a meeting on conscientious objection in the home town of Víctor Hugo Maciel, a conscript who had been killed on 2 October whilst doing military service with the *1a División de Caballería*, 1st Cavalry Division. Since the soldier's death, community members have been reluctant to allow their children to undertake military service at the barracks and the soldier's family had invited César Barrios to inform the community about conscientious objection.

Some 70 kilometres from Encarnación, on the road to Pirapey, a military patrol, made up of five soldiers without identity badges or insignia of rank, stopped the bus and ordered the passengers to show their identity documents. When César Barrios was also asked to show his military exemption papers, he declared that he was a conscientious objector and produced a document from the *Comisión de Derechos Humanos de la Cámara de Diputados*, Human Rights Commission of the Chamber of Deputies, acknowledging his status as a conscientious objector. One of the soldiers ripped up the document in front of the other passengers.

César Barrios was then forced out of the bus, handcuffed, blindfolded, and forced into the military patrol's vehicle. After a journey of three or four hours they arrived at a military base where César Barrios was forced into a dirty bathroom, had his blindfold removed, and was forced to inhale a sleep-inducing chemical. He fell to the ground and was repeatedly kicked by the soldiers. After that five naked soldiers came in, insulted him, saying that conscientious objectors were homosexuals. They said that they would teach him to be a good "macho", and threatened to rape him. Meanwhile, the soldiers masturbated themselves.

César Barrios was then forced onto a chair, his arms tied behind his back, and was threatened with a knife and questioned about the MOC. The soldiers demanded to know the names and addresses of the leaders of the MOC, and about its members and the campaign against compulsory military service. César Barrios was tortured into the early hours of 5 November. He was kept in the bathroom until the evening when a member of the military unit reportedly helped him to escape. Reportedly, César Barrios found that he was in the headquarters of the *III División de Caballería*, III Division of the Cavalry, in Ciudad del Este.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Earlier in 1995, Venancio Vera, Pablo Ozorio (on 19 February) and Sebastián Coronel (4 March) were abducted by members of the National Police in San

Joaquín. During their detention the three conscientious objectors were beaten and forced to undertake four days of forced labour. To date none of those responsible for their detention and ill-treatment has been detained or charged. This continued impunity makes further abductions and torture of conscientious objectors more likely.

Conscientious objection in Paraguay is a constitutional right and conscientious objectors need only declare their objection to compulsory military service to gain legal recognition of their status. To date approximately 600 people have declared themselves to be conscientious objectors. Since October 1993 seven conscientious objectors have reportedly been illegally detained by members of the security forces.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of César Barrios and other members of the *Movimiento de Objeción de Conciencia* (MOC), Conscientious Objection Movement, following the alleged abduction and torture of César Barrios on 4 November 1995, apparently by members of the III Cavalry Division;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into these allegations;
- expressing concern that this is the fourth such case this year (giving details of others if possible) and that no one has yet been brought to justice for these violations;
- calling on the authorities to publicly condemn these abuses, and to ensure that the apparent impunity of those responsible is ended.

APPEALS TO:

President of Paraguay

Exmo. Sr. Presidente de la República del Paraguay
 Juan Carlos Wasmosy
 Palacio de López, Asunción, Paraguay

Telegrams: Presidente Wasmosy, Asunción, Paraguay

Telexes: 411 SUBINFOR PY

Faxes: + 595 21 49 88 09; +595 21 49 36 22

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Wasmosy

Minister of the Interior

Exmo. Sr. Ministro del Interior
 Dr Diógenes Martínez
 Ministerio del Interior

Estrella y Montevideo, Asunción, Paraguay

Telegrams: Ministro del Interior, Asunción, Paraguay

Faxes: 595 21 44 00 44

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

Minister of Defence

Exmo. Sr. Ministro de Defensa Nacional

Dr. Hugo Estigarribia Elizeche
 Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
 Avda Mcal. López y Vice Pdte. Sánchez
 Asunción, Paraguay

Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa Nacional, Asunción, Paraguay

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Exmo. Sr. Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores

Luis Ramirez Boettner

Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores

Pdte. Franco 707 c/O'Leary, Asunción, Paraguay

Telegrams: Ministro Relaciones Exteriores, Asunción, Paraguay

Telexes: 111 RELACIONES PY

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

COPIES TO:President of the National Congress

Señor Milcíades Rafael Casabianca

Presidente del Congreso Nacional

Avda. República y 14 de mayo, Asunción, Paraguay

Human Rights Organization

Servicio de Justicia y Paz - Paraguay, SERPAJ,

Azara 313c/Iturbe 2do Piso, 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 6 January 1996.