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Paraguay: Reprisals against juvenile inmates are deplorable

Five youths detained in the Panchito López Juvenile Detention Centre in Asunción have been subjected to beatings and punitive transfers after denouncing torture and ill-treatment to delegates from Amnesty International's US Section, Amnesty International said today.

"Reprisal measures against inmates testifying to the abuses they are routinely subjected to are totally unacceptable," the organization added.

On 6 April the cases of Jorge Herebia, Rafael Pereira, Oscar Acuña, Diego Acosta and Jimmy Orlando Dos Santos were presented amongst others to the Amnesty International USA delegates who were visiting the Panchito López Detention Centre.

The following day they were beaten by a prison guard in front of other detainees and four of them were then transferred to adult prisons in Paraguay's interior. Another detainee, Diego Acosta, was held handcuffed in an isolation cell. A few days later he was transferred to another juvenile detention centre after an unannounced visit by the Paraguayan Vice-Minister of Justice.

"A full and independent investigation must be carried out into the retaliatory ill-treatment inflicted on the five youths and those responsible must be brought to justice," Amnesty International said.

The head of prison security has reportedly been suspended for ordering that Diego Acosta be sent to the isolation cell and a prison guard has also been suspended after detainees accused him of torture and ill-treatment.

"Severe overcrowding, poor sanitation, insufficient food and lack of medical care make conditions of detention in the Panchito López centre extremely harsh," Amnesty International said, renewing its call for the detention centre to be closed.

The organization is also urging the Paraguayan authorities to act on their repeated promises to transfer all the juvenile detainees to more adequate premises.

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