

PUBLIC

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UA 111/00 Fear for safety/Possible extrajudicial executions 8 May 2000

VENEZUELA Donis Robert RAMIREZ PIRONA (fear for safety)
Geralt Nazareht GARCIA (17)(killed)
Guillermina del CARMEN COLMENARES (f)(killed)

Police have reportedly threatened to kill Donis Robert Ramírez Pirona, after he saw them shoot Geralt Nazareht García. Another witness, Guillermina del Carmen Colmenares, was shot and fatally wounded at the scene.

On 8 April 2000 Donis Ramírez was outside his home in the Nuevo Horizonte district of the capital, Caracas, talking to Geralt García. Five *Policía Metropolitana* (Metropolitan Police) officers approached, one of whom fired his gun in the air. Geralt García ran away, and as he ran Donis Ramírez saw the police open fire, hitting him in the back. The police caught him in Araguaney street and shot him in the head several times, killing him.

People living nearby heard the shots and looked out of their windows. The police saw they were being watched and opened fire, fatally wounding Guillermina del Carmen Colmenares.

Other officers had handcuffed Donis Ramírez, and they took him away in a car and gave him what is known as "*un recorrido*", in which police drive detainees around, intimidating or threatening to kill them. The officers warned Donis Ramírez that if he complained about the shootings, they would "literally disappear him off the face of the Earth" (*sería desaparecido literalmente del mapa*). Before they let him go, the police said they would be watching him.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Over the years Amnesty International has received hundreds of complaints about abuses by the Venezuelan security forces, including allegations of extrajudicial executions. The victims are mainly criminal suspects, civilians protesting against government measures and people living in shanty towns and poor neighbourhoods. Those responsible for these gross abuses are almost never brought to justice.

In February 1999, Colonel Hugo Chávez Frías became President of Venezuela. His government - which came to office against a background of serious economic problems and official corruption - promised radical changes, including measures to strengthen the protection of human rights. A new Constitution, which came into effect last December, included the recognition of the right to life and personal integrity.

Amnesty International has welcomed statements from President Chávez's administration that the rule of law and the protection of human rights, including tackling the problem of impunity, are central to its program. However, the organisation has pointed out that to make the defense and promotion of human rights a reality will require legislative, administrative and other measures, backed by the necessary political will and resources. This includes ensuring that victims are able to file a complaint without feeling that they will suffer reprisals.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Donis Robert Ramírez Pirona and at the reported killing by the Metropolitan Police on 8 April 2000 of Geralt Nazareht García and Guillermina del Carmen Colmenares;
- requesting immediate measures be taken to guarantee the life and integrity of Donis Ramírez, after Metropolitan Police officers threatened to kill him when he witnessed the shooting of Geralt Nazareth García in the district of Nuevo Horizonte, Caracas;
- requesting a prompt and independent investigation into the death threats and the two killings, that the findings be made public and those responsible be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Coronel Hugo Chávez Frias

Presidente de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela

Palacio de Miraflores

Caracas, Venezuela

Fax: + 58 2 806 3102

Telex: 21161 MIRAF VC

Salutation: Estimado Presidente/Dear President

Attorney General

Dr. Javier Elechiguerra

Fiscal General de la República

Fiscalía General de la República

Parque Carabobo, Av. Universidad

Caracas, Venezuela

Fax: + 58 2 577 2144 (Ask for fax tone: "Por favor, me da tono de fax")

+ 58 2 576 4419

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/ Estimado Fiscal General

COPIES TO:

Human rights organization

Red de Apoyo por la Justicia y Paz

Apartado Postal 17.476

Parque Central

Caracas 1015-A, Venezuela

and to diplomatic representatives of Venezuela accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 18 June 2000.