

PUBLIC

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Fear for Safety / Ill-treatment

28 February 2000

PARAGUAY

Francisco CARBALLO FIGUEREDO (15)
Rubén Dario ALCARAZ (17)
and other detainees at the "Panchito López" juvenile
detention centre

Two teenaged inmates at a juvenile detention centre in the Paraguayan capital, Asunción, have reportedly been tortured and ill-treated by prison guards. Amnesty International fears for their safety and well-being, and that of other detainees at the centre.

Guards at the *Correccional de Menores "Panchito López"*, "Panchito López" juvenile detention centre, reportedly left Francisco Carballo Figueredo upside down handcuffed to a column for three hours in the early morning of 25 February 2000. Witnesses who saw him afterwards said his back was severely bruised from a beating, and that he was traumatised.

At the same time Rubén Dario Alcaraz was reportedly hung up by his wrists. He was also kicked with steel toe-capped boots.

There have been two serious fires at "Panchito López" in the past month, in which seven inmates have died and more than 20 have suffered serious burns. Since the fires there has reportedly been an increase in ill-treatment of inmates by prison guards.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has expressed repeated concern to the Paraguayan authorities about the grossly inadequate conditions at "Panchito López", where minors, 90% of whom are in pretrial detention and have not been sentenced, are held in severely overcrowded, insanitary cells with few washing facilities, little exercise or fresh air, with insufficient food and lack of proper medical care. International organizations including the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) have expressed similar concerns.

Amnesty International delegates conveyed these concerns personally to the Vice-Minister of Justice, Dr Fernando Canilla Veras, during a visit to Paraguay in October 1999. The Vice-Minister acknowledged that the detention centre's present site was wholly inadequate. He repeated an assurance he has given several times, that measures were being taken to improve conditions and that arrangements were almost complete for the imminent transfer of the inmates to a new, purpose-built, juvenile detention centre in Luque. The IACHR received similar assurances, being told that "Panchito López" would be relocated to the site in Luque by the end of 1999.

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

- expressing concern at reports that Francisco Carballo Figueredo and Rubén Dario Alcaraz were tortured and ill-treated at the *Correccional de Menores "Panchito López"* on 25 February 2000;
- urging a full and impartial investigation, the results of which should be made public, into ill-treatment and torture of detainees by prison guards;
- urging a full and impartial investigation into the fire of 11 February 2000 at the centre, to determine any criminal responsibility for allowing

the fires to break out or for failing to save the juvenile detainees who died or were injured;

- calling for the *Correccional de Menores "Panchito López"* to be closed immediately, and the remaining juvenile detainees transferred to the proposed new centre in Luque;
- reminding the authorities of their repeated failure to transfer the detention centre to new premises;
- asking the authorities to promptly review outstanding judicial processes against the detainees, more than 90% of whom have not been sentenced.

APPEALS TO:

President

Exmo. Sr. Presidente de la República del Paraguay
Don Luis Angel Gonzalez Macchi
Palacio de López
El Paraguayo Independiente y Ayolas
Asunción, Paraguay

Telegrams: Presidente, Asunción, Paraguay

Faxes: + 595 21 498 809;

Salutation: Sr. Presidente / Dear President

Minister of Justice

Dr Silvio Ferreira Fernández
Ministro de Justicia
Gaspar R. de Francia y EE.UU.
Asunción, Paraguay

Telegrams: Ministro Justicia, Asunción, Paraguay

Faxes: + 595 21 208 469

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Dr Juan Esteban Aguirre
Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores
O'Leary 222 y Pte. Franco
Asunción, Paraguay

Telegrams: Ministro Relaciones Exteriores, Asunción, Paraguay

Faxes: + 595 21 490 676

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Non-governmental Organisation

Defensa de los Niños Internacional-DNI
Casilla de Correo N° 3101
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 10 April 2000.