

CHILE

The proliferation of death threats and other forms of intimidation and harassment by clandestine groups of human rights workers and many others considered government critics is one of Amnesty International's main concerns in Chile. Although the government denies responsibility for these groups and has stated that investigations are being conducted in a number of cases, they are still operating with impunity. None of the investigations allegedly being conducted by police or the courts have so far led to the identification and punishment of those responsible for the intimidation. The manner in which the groups operate and the scale of their activities leaves little doubt that their activities are officially condoned and that they may comprise members of the security forces acting secretly together with civilian collaborators.

The following are a few examples of the cases reported recently to Amnesty International:

Alejandro Reyes Osorio, a 22 year old student and member of a local human rights group, alleged that on 5 October 1987 he was forced into a white van by two men, a black woollen hood was pulled over his head so that it covered his face. He was thrown to the floor, punched in the back and face and then paraffin was poured all over his body. His captors then took off all his clothes except his underpants, passed a sharp cutting instrument over his buttocks and gave him electric shocks in the stomach area. They forced him to drink alcohol and interrogated him about people he did not know and also about one of his friends. He was abandoned naked, feeling sick and having lost all notion of time.

Human rights lawyers at the offices of Comité de Defensa de los Derechos del Pueblo, (CODEPU), Peoples' Rights Defence Committee, in Valparaíso, received several telephone calls on 8 March 1988 indicating that a bomb had been planted in the office. A box was found containing a fake bomb. Two days later they received further telephone calls reminding them of the earlier incident and again on 14 March warning them to "watch out". On the night of 14/15 March, the office of Celia Morgunovsky, one of the lawyers who collaborates with CODEPU, was raided and left in complete disarray for the second time this year.

Human rights lawyer and cultural worker Miguel Angel Cancino received an envelope containing what appeared to be a poisonous powder. It was left on his desk when his office was raided on 5 February 1988. The office was left in complete disarray and several thousand dollars stolen belonging to the Casa Cultural Crisol, "Crisol" Cultural Centre, of which he is a Director and legal advisor. A few days later a man telephoned him to let him know he was the person who was going to kill him.

An attempt to abduct Miguel Angel Alfaro (aged 23), Administrative Secretary of CODEPU in Santiago, was made on 15 March 1988. Four men in civilian clothing attempted to abduct him at about 8.00pm as he was leaving a meeting in Santiago. He escaped and contacted other CODEPU members. He has received repeated death threats since December 1987 but the courts have so far refused to grant him police protection.

Monica Garcia, a human rights lawyer, received a death threat on 26 January 1988 over the telephone. The message was that a bomb would be left in her garden. A petition to the courts was presented requesting police protection on 27 January.