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CHILE

FURTHER INFORMATION ON DETAINEES SENT TO CONCHI UNDER THE STATE OF SIEGE

Amnesty International is concerned that five more people whom it considers to be prisoners of conscience are being detained under the provisions of the State of Siege at a military camp near Conchi where eleven others were sent in February 1985. (See AMR 22/14/85).

Pablo VERGARA LOYOLA, Rafael PEREZ CUEVAS, Carlos CUEVAS CUETO and Guillermo GARCES were reportedly arrested around 20 March 1985 for distributing pamphlets criticising the government's economic policies. They are thought to be members of the Partido Humanista (Humanist Party) which was established in May 1984. Others arrested at the same time were released but these four men were transferred to Conchi after being held for several days in a police station.

Medical student Kenneth MORALES MORRISON was sent to Conchi after being arrested during a demonstration in the Palace of Justice on 12 March protesting against the possible convocation of a war tribunal to try five political prisoners, three of whom faced possible death sentences.

Two other men have also been sent to the prison camp at Conchi after being arrested by uniformed police during an international football match between Chile and Ecuador at the National Stadium in Santiago on 17 March. It is reported that during the match, anti-government slogans were called out. The two men arrested were Luis MUÑOZ URBINA and Antonio CASTILLO MORALES. They were taken to the 19 Comisaría (police station) before being sent to Conchi on 9 April. Amnesty International is seeking further information about the reasons for their arrest. It is also concerned that they were not brought before a judge or court in order that a decision be taken as to whether they should be committed for trial.

Two of the eleven men sent to Conchi in February have since been transferred to places of banishment. Abraham RIVAS SALAZAR was taken to hospital in Calama not long after arriving in Conchi. It is believed that the altitude aggravated a heart problem from which he suffered. The authorities eventually agreed to change the order of detention against him to one of banishment, and he was moved to Sierra Gorda.

On 12 March, in response to a petition for amparo (similar to habeas corpus), the Interior Minister informed the Santiago Appeals Court that it had changed the detention order against Sergio Vuskovic to one of banishment. He is now thought to have been transferred to Tal Tal.

Lawyers submitted several other petitions to the courts on behalf of the detainees held in Conchi since February asserting violation of their constitutional rights. Correspondence sent to them at the prison camp reportedly either did not reach the addressee or arrived opened. As reported previously, relatives who travelled the long and difficult journey from Concepción (more than 2000 km) and Valparaíso (more than 1500 km) were not allowed into the camp to see the prisoners. Only the Bishop of Calama was able to visit them initially.

On 26 February, the Santiago Appeals Court accepted one of the petitions for amparo and ordered that the incommunicado detention be lifted. It is thought that the detainees are now allowed family visits, though these are in practice severely restricted because of the journey problems.

The detainees are being held in a military camp surrounded by barbed wire (see diagram) which was recently altered in order to be able to house detainees. It is several kilometers outside the village of Conchi itself, at 3000 metres altitude. Differences between day and night time temperatures are extreme. The village of Conchi has only about one hundred inhabitants, no electricity and no shops for food or provisions.

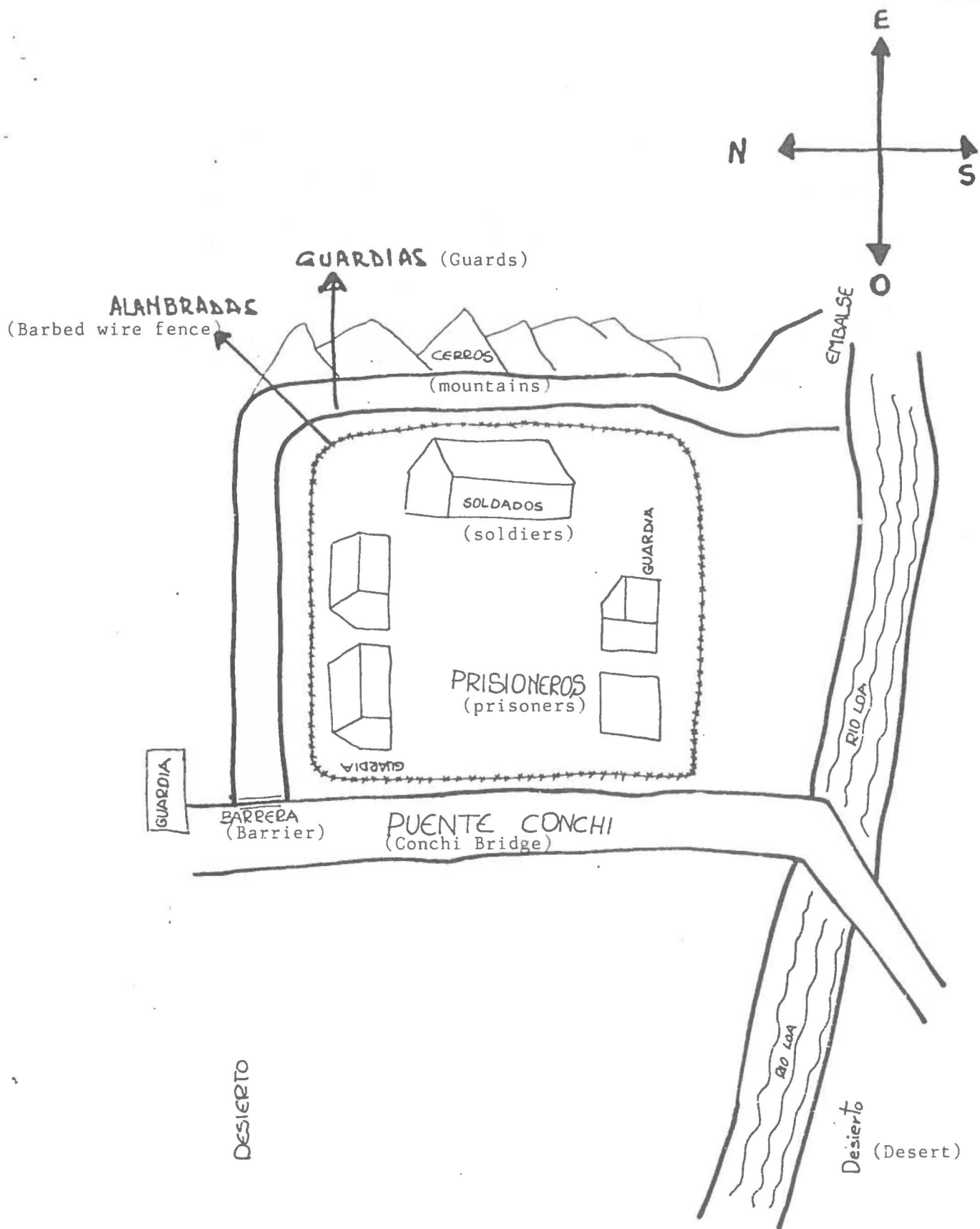
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The detainees are housed in wooden huts inside the camp and are believed to be subjected to a strict military routine, including exercises.

Conchi is the second camp to be used as a detention centre since the State of Siege came into force in November 1984. At the beginning of that month, more than five hundred people mostly arrested during raids on Santiago shanty towns were sent to a military camp in Pisagua, also in the northern desert region of Chile. They were initially thought to have been banished (i.e. confined to the village, having to report to police twice or three times a day). When lawyers sought clarification of their legal status from the courts however, their lawyers were informed that they were being held as detainees under the provisions of the State of Siege. The Government stated that they were "common criminals" and had been sent to Pisagua for "rehabilitation". They were not however brought before a judge or court or committed for trial. Although most of those sent to Pisagua are thought not to have been held on account of their political activities, a number of detainees were reportedly arrested because of their activities as community leaders.

About half of the detainees in Pisagua have now been released, but 269 are still believed to be held there. Like those detained in Conchi, no date has been given for their release and they can be held indefinitely without charge or trial throughout the duration of the State of Siege. Amnesty International is seeking to clarify whether any political detainees are still being held in Pisagua.

Amnesty International is appealing to the authorities to unconditionally release those detainees held in Conchi whom it considers to be prisoners of conscience. It is seeking further information about the arrest of Luis Muñoz and Antonio Castillo and is urging that they be immediately released unless brought before a judge and tried.



A diagram of the military camp where the detainees are being held. The diagram was reportedly attached to the petition for amparo submitted to the Santiago Appeals Court on behalf of the detainees.