



Honorary Chair
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FREEDOM NOW

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DR. LUIS WILLIAMS POLLO RIVERA, 65, HAS PASSED AWAY IN PERUVIAN CUSTODY

Freedom Now mourns the passing of Dr. Luis Williams Pollo Rivera, who died February 12 from a heart attack. Dr. Pollo was a medical doctor arbitrarily imprisoned by Peruvian authorities since August 2003. Dr. Pollo's funeral will be held today in Peru.

On August 26, 2003, Dr. Pollo was arrested by the Peruvian National Intelligence Directorate and accused of rendering support to the terrorist organization Shining Path "through his medical knowledge." Although the government presented no evidence that Dr. Pollo was a member of Shining Path, or that he had ever spoken out against the Peruvian government or advocated violence, the National Terrorism Chamber convicted Dr. Pollo and sentenced him to 10 years in prison.

Previously, a Peruvian military tribunal convicted Dr. Pollo in 1992 of the same crime. Dr. Pollo was tortured and tried before "faceless" masked judges. A civilian court later acquitted Dr. Pollo of all charges. In spite of the acquittal, in 2003 prosecutors again brought the same charges against Dr. Pollo, using the same evidence.

Freedom Now filed a petition on behalf of Dr. Pollo with the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention arguing that his continued detention violated international law. In its November 2010 opinion, the Working Group found that Dr. Pollo's detention "is arbitrary as it violates the precepts of articles 6, 7, and 11 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; articles 9, 10, and 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights." Moreover, the Working Group instructed that Peru's criminalization of medical treatment was illegal under international law. The Government of Peru did not comply with the opinion of the United Nations, and instead it continued to detain Dr. Pollo. Dr. Pollo's local counsel Carolina Loayza submitted Dr. Pollo's case to the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights in 2005; the case was accepted and is still pending.

Dr. Pollo's health had declined substantially in recent years. He suffered from diabetes mellitus with progressive loss of vision from an unspecified paralytic syndrome and secondary hypertension. He also suffered from spinal injuries resulting from torture inflicted on him during his first period of imprisonment. In 2007, Peruvian authorities moved Dr. Pollo to a hospital in order to comply with an order by the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights that called for immediate medical attention. Although Dr. Pollo spent these last few years in a hospital, he did so under the authority of prison officials as he remained a prisoner.

Just days before his death, Dr. Pollo had been moved to the infectious diseases ward, where his health rapidly deteriorated. Serious questions have been raised as to the quality of medical care Dr. Pollo had been receiving.

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Our mission is to free prisoners of conscience through focused legal, political and public relations advocacy efforts.