

Maria Inamagua Campaign for Justice

1304 East Lake Street - Room 203

Minneapolis, MN 55407

Enforce the Human Rights Treaties!

Justice for Maria! Justice for All!

News Release: July 14, 2006

For further information, contact Peter Brown at 612-824-6533.

Formal Request for Federal Investigation into Death of Maria Inamagua

Local human rights activists today filed a formal request with federal officials seeking an expeditious, independent, and thorough investigation into the death of Maria Inamagua, the 30-year old Ecuadorian immigrant, wife and mother who died while in the custody of the Ramsey County Jail on April 14, 2006. (A .pdf copy of the request for investigation, which also contains a concise statement of the facts surrounding the death of Maria Inamagua, will be provided upon request to Peter Brown at president@nlgminnesota.org.)

In a letter to Richard Skinner, Inspector General for the Department of Homeland Security, Jorge Panchi, President of the Ecuadorian Civic Committee in Minnesota and stated:

We request that your investigation begin with assessing compliance with the relevant standards set forth in your own Department's "Detention Operations Manual" and Performance Based Detention Standards but also assess compliance by responsible parties with applicable state and federal civil rights laws, constitutional provisions [such as the 8th Amendment prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment] and other applicable laws, including the obligations that the United States has undertaken as a signatory and ratifier of several Human Rights Treaties, which are part of the "supreme law of the land" under Article VI, Clause 2 of the U.S. Constitution.

The letter highlighted seven applicable provisions from several of the Human Rights Treaties, including the United States' obligation under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ratified by the United States in 1994)¹ to

¹ Currently, the United States compliance with its commitments under the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights** is being reviewed by the United Nations' Human Rights Committee in Geneva, Switzerland on July 17 and 18, 2006. Representatives of several organizations with observer status are entitled are attending these sessions, including Twin Cities based Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights (MAHR). MAHR Deputy Director Jennifer Prestholdt is representing MAHR in Geneva: jprstholt@mnadvocates.org.

. . . treat all persons deprived of their liberty with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person.”

Regarding the importance of the Human Rights Treaty obligations, the letter stated:

We highlight these treaty provisions because they provide the clearest and swiftest path to assure that what happened to Maria Inamagua in Ramsey County Jail does not happen to anyone ever again.

The letter identified specific practical preventive measures required by the treaties to assure that detained persons are not subject to “cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment”, including

- 1) systematic review arrangements for the custody and treatment of persons subject to any form of arrest, detention or imprisonment and
- 2) that education and information regarding the prohibition against cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment are fully included in the training of law enforcement personnel, civil or military, medical personnel, public officials and other persons who may be involved in the custody of any person arrested, detained, or imprisoned and that their rules include this prohibition.

The letter concludes requesting that the Inspector General respond affirmatively, confirming that the scope of the investigation he will conduct will be an expeditious, independent, and thorough investigation with the scope as described in the latter.

Signers of the letter, in addition to Mr. Panchi are Silvia Ibanez on behalf of the ***Maria Inamagua Campaign for Justice***, and Peter Brown, President of the Minnesota Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild.

Additional persons knowledgeable about the treaty obligations cited in the letter are:

- **Barbara Frey**, Director of the Human Rights Program at the University of Minnesota School of Law: 612-624-9007.
- **David Weissbrodt**, Fredrikson and Byron Professor of Law, University of Minnesota School of Law: currently teaching at Oxford, England: weiss001@umn.edu.
- **Michele Garnett McKenzie**, Director of the Immigrant & Refugee Program at Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights: 612-341-3302, extension 117.
- **Jennifer Prestholdt**, Deputy Director, Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights: currently in Geneva, Switzerland for the Human Rights Committee review of United States compliance with the Covenant for Political and Civil Rights - jprestholdt@mnadvocates.org.
- **Ann Fagan Ginger**, Civil Rights Attorney and Executive Director of the Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute:

For further information, contact Peter Brown, Minnesota Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild 612-824-6533 or president@nlgminnesota.org.