

Ecuador continues holding three Peruvian Pastors

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

Quito, Ecuador--The Ecuadorian government says it is continuing its investigation into five Peruvians detained on charges of spying during a recent military conflict between the two countries.

Ecuador had originally detained seven people on espionage charges, but later released two of them.

Peruvian human rights groups have charged that four of those detained are evangelical pastors/missionaries working in Ecuador.

If found guilty on the charges the alleged spies could face prison sentences of between fifteen and eighteen years.

The four pastors and one other civilian charged are being held in a military prison in the southern Ecuadorian town of Cuenca.

The names of the four pastors, Edgar Jonny Seminario Coveñas, Jos, Manuel Timan Sandoval, Jorge Antonio Maza Salinas and Jos, Rojano Gonz lez Alarcón are included in a list of prisoners recently released by the government.

Local church officials in Quito, who asked not to be identified, told NNI that Gonz les, a missionary with The Mission Society of the Christian Church in Ecuador, has admitted passing information to Peruvian authorities.

Meanwhile, Peru has sentenced two Ecuadorian soldiers to eighteen years in prison for alleged spying activities during the conflict.

The two countries fought border clashes during late January and February along their disputed border. Fighting left dozens dead and hundreds wounded.

International observers are monitoring a withdrawal of troops and demilitarization of the area which has been in dispute since a war in 1941 in which Ecuador lost almost half its territory. New clashes were reported on May 9, leading to fears that the war could start anew.

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