

URGENT ACTION

FAMILIES DIVIDED AFTER RAID ON COMMUNITY

Seventy-one members of a Guatemalan community who had sought refuge in Tabasco state, Mexico, have been detained by Mexican authorities and taken to a migrant detention centre. Over 100 members of the community remain in Tabasco state. Those detained include children, and some families have apparently been divided.

In the early hours of 9 January, Mexican police officers raided a makeshift camp where Guatemalan citizens from the **Nueva Esperanza Community** had been living, in the community of Nuevo Progreso, Tabasco state. The community had fled from Guatemala to Mexico in August 2011, when they were forced off their land by members of the Guatemalan army and police. They were not provided with alternative housing in Guatemala.

According to witnesses, the Mexican authorities apparently tried to detain children first so that their families would agree to follow them into the waiting vehicles. A total of 71 members of the community were detained, including at least 45 children, and taken to a migrant detention centre in Tapachula, Chiapas state, many hours drive from where they were detained. It is believed that repatriation procedures have been initiated. Over a hundred members of the community managed to flee the operation and have since returned to Nuevo Progreso. According to local human rights defenders, several families were separated during the operation including one ten-year-old boy whose parents were detained while he remains in the makeshift camp. Those still at the camp could still be detained or face other reprisals as members of the community reported that some officials threatened to return to the community with more force if they did not give themselves up to police and migration officials. The camp was partially destroyed. Mexico's migration authorities have stated that the operation was a "humanitarian rescue" operation to stop the community living in poor conditions.

Under the terms of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), to which Mexico is a state party, children should not be separated from their parents unless safeguards regarding the child's welfare are in place. In addition, the CRC states that children should not be deprived of contact with their families.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Urge the authorities to ensure that the repatriations of members of the Nueva Esperanza community are carried out in line with the international human rights standards and that no repatriation leads to the division of families;
- Calling on the authorities to ensure their treatment of the families of Nueva Esperanza is in accordance with their obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Urge the authorities to explain the procedures used in the raid on the community on 9 December, including the partial destruction of the camp and the threats made to the remaining members of the community.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 22 FEBRUARY 2012 TO:

President of Mexico

Lic. Felipe de Jesús Calderón Hinojosa
Residencia Oficial de Los Pinos
Casa Miguel Alemán
Col. San Miguel Chapultepec
México DF, CP 11850
México
Fax: +52 55 5093 5321
Email: felipe.calderon@presidencia.gob.mx
Salutation: Dear President Calderon

Commissioner of the National Migration Institute

Salvador Beltrán del Río Madrid
Homero No. 1832; Piso 19
Col. Los Morales Polanco Del. Miguel
Hidalgo
México D.F. C.P. 11510
México
Email: sbeltrandelrio@inami.gob.mx

Fax: +52 55 53872484

Salutation: Dear Commissioner Governor of Tabasco State

Q.F.B. Andrés Granier Melo
Independencia # 2, Col. Centro,
Villahermosa, Tabasco,
México, CP 86000
MEXICO
Fax: +52 993 314 2612
Email: gobernador@tabasco.gob.mx
Salutation: Dear Governor

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 340/11. Further information:

www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR41/074/2011/en

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 23 August the community of Nueva Esperanza were forced off their land by members of the Guatemalan army and National Police. They were not given prior warning of the eviction and were not provided with alternative housing. The authorities claim the community had to be removed from the land as it was an environmental conservation area. The community's houses, school and church were burnt down during the eviction.

As a result of the eviction, the 300 inhabitants, including over 100 children and several pregnant women, sought refuge across the Mexican border in the community of Nuevo Progreso, Tabasco state. The violence and speed of the eviction left the community unable to gather their belongings before they left. The Mexican authorities have provided the community with some assistance and provided access to representatives of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) However, migrants have not sought refugee status as they wish to return to their lands in Guatemala

Amnesty International is urging the Guatemalan authorities to resolve the dispute as a matter of urgency and grant the Nueva Esperanza community adequate alternative land and housing in accordance with their wishes, with access to shelter, food, water, healthcare services in a location where their physical integrity can be guaranteed.

Name: Nueva Esperanza community

Gender m/f: m & f

Further information on UA: 340/11 Index: AMR 41/002/2012 Issue Date: 11 January 2012

