

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 41/003/2004

UA 23/04

Fear for safety/Use of excessive force

16 January 2004

MEXICO

Members of the community of Tlanepantla, State of Morelos

**Killed: Gregorio Sánchez (m)**

---

Police appear to have used excessive force during the eviction of indigenous people occupying the town hall in the community of Tlanepantla, State of Morelos, on 14 January 2004. One man, Gregorio Sánchez, was reportedly shot dead. At least 12 others were injured, including three police officers. The police detained at least 15 people, but are not known to have charged them with any recognisably criminal offence. While reports are confused about the nature of the police action, Amnesty International is concerned that the incident may worsen the already tense situation in the community, and lead to greater violence.

For some time, the mayor of Tlanepantla, a member of the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), Institutional Revolutionary Party, had refused to allow elections of local community representatives based on traditional indigenous practices (*usos y costumbres*).

On 2 November 2003, protesting community members occupied the Town Hall. On 26 November municipal police allegedly broke up a march to the state capital, Cuernavaca, to make the community's grievances known to the governor, arresting 59 people and injuring two. Since then tension in the community has grown. Members of the community opposed to the mayor created the *Consejo Popular Autónomo* (Autonomous Popular Council), an alternative local administration, on 11 January. Two days later, up to 400 supporters of the Mayor reportedly occupied the centre of the community, threatening those involved in the *Consejo Popular Autónomo*.

On 13 January armed state and federal police officers reportedly arrived to evict those occupying the Town Hall. The operation began at 2.30 am on 14 January.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Discrimination, marginalization of indigenous people and community conflicts such as that in Tlanepantla have given rise to multiple human rights violations in indigenous communities, particularly in southern Mexico, for some years. Conflicts are frequently related to manipulation of electoral processes or official failure to recognise traditional indigenous electoral practices (*usos y costumbres*). These conflicts frequently distract attention from the struggle for continued control of communities by *caciques* (local political bosses) who enjoy support from state authorities. All too often state authorities fail to act in a timely and impartial manner to resolve conflicts, leading to further violence.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:**

- expressing concern that one man was killed and 12 others wounded as a result of police action in the community of Tlanepantla, State of Morelos, on 14 January;
- expressing concern for the safety of the whole community of Tlanepantla, particularly members of the *Consejo Autónomo Popular*, in view of the recent violence, and calling on the authorities to guarantee their safety;
- expressing concern that the state has apparently failed to act impartially to prevent the escalating community conflict in Tlanepantla, and that the police appear to have used excessive force;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee the safety of those in detention, and to ensure that they have access to their families, legal advice and any medical attention they may need;

- calling on the authorities to carry out a prompt, impartial and exhaustive investigation into the events on 14 January, to make their findings public, identify those responsible for killing Gregorio Sánchez and injuring 12 others and bring them to justice.

**APPEALS TO:**

Governor of Morelos

Lic. Sergio Estrada Cagigal  
Gobernador del Estado de Morelos  
Palacio de Gobierno  
Plaza de la Constitución  
Cuernavaca 62000  
Estado de Morelos, MEXICO

**Faxes:** +52 777 3 29 23 24 (if someone answers the phone, ask: “*me da tono de fax por favor*”)

**Salutation:** Dear Governor/Señor Gobernador

Attorney General of Morelos

Lic. Guillermo Adolfo Tenorio Avila  
Procurador del Estado de Morelos  
Emiliano Zapata 803  
Col. Buenavista  
Cuernavaca 62000  
Estado de Morelos  
MEXICO

**Fax:** +52 777 329 15 00 if someone answers the phone, ask: “*me da tono de fax por favor*”)

**Salutation:** Dear Attorney General/Señor Procurador

Attorney General of the Republic

General Rafael Marcial Macedo de la Concha  
Procurador General de la Republica  
Procuraduría General de la República  
Reforma Cuauhtemoc esq.Violeta 75  
Col. Guerrero  
Delegación Cuauhtémoc  
México D.F., C.P. 06 500  
MEXICO

**Fax:** +525 55 346 0983 (if someone answers the phone, ask: “*me da tono de fax por favor*”)

**Salutation:** Dear Attorney General/Señor Procurador General

**COPIES TO:**

Non-governmental Human Rights Organization

Centro de Derecho Humanos “Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez” AC  
Serapio Rendón #57-b  
Col. San Rafael, C.P. 06470  
Mexico D.F.  
MEXICO

**Fax:+ 52 55 5546 82**

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 27 February 2004.