

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 41/010/2006

15 February 2006

Further Information on UA 09/06 (AMR 41/004/2006, 10 January 2006) and follow-up (AMR 41/005/2006, 13 January 2006) - Fear for safety/death threats

MEXICO **Martín Barrios Hernández (m), human rights defender, president of the Human and Labour Rights Commission of Tehuacán Valley (Comisión de Derechos Humanos y Laborales del Valle de Tehuacán)**
The family of Martín Barrios Hernández
Members of the Human and Labour Rights Commission of Tehuacán Valley

Human rights defender Martín Barrios Hernández has been warned that his life is at risk. Friends and relatives of Martín Barrios have been told that an individual reportedly linked with the assembly plant (*maquila*) industry has paid someone to kill Martín Barrios if he continues to defend and publicize the poor labour conditions of the *maquila* workers. His family and other members of the Human and Labour Rights Commission of Tehuacán Valley (*Comisión de Derechos Humanos y Laborales del Valle de Tehuacán*) may also be in danger.

According to reports, on 12 February, during a public forum held in the municipality of Altepexi, adjacent to the Tehuacán Valley in the southern state of Puebla, a member of Martín Barrios's family was approached by a family friend who said, "Take care, all of you, and take care of Martín because a person has been hired and is going for Martín's head" (*Cuidense y cuiden a Martín porque ya está contratada una persona que va sobre su cabeza*). The friend allegedly said that his information came from a reliable source believed to be linked to the owners of the *maquilas*. Later the same day, Martín Barrios was approached by another man who reportedly reaffirmed the allegations.

In recent months, owners of *maquilas* in the Tehuacán valley have made public accusations that Martín Barrios and the Human and Labour Rights Commission of Tehuacán Valley are responsible for organizing protests and strikes that discourage foreign investment.

On 29 December 2005, Martín Barrios was detained and charged after a local *maquila* owner made allegations that he had tried to blackmail him. The detention appeared to have been used as an apparent attempt to prevent him from carrying out his legitimate human right work. He was released on 12 January 2006 after being pardoned by the local *maquila* owner who had accused him. After his release, Martín Barrios stated that he had never asked the *maquila* owner for a pardon because he is innocent of the charges brought against him, and said that he would not be deterred from continuing carrying out his work.

Lawyers working on behalf of Martín Barrios have submitted a petition to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, calling for precautionary protection measures to be implemented to ensure his safety.

Martín Barrios Hernandez has previously been threatened and intimidated as a result of his human rights activities. On 30 December 2003 he was seriously assaulted outside his home (see UA 26/04, AMR 41/004/2004, 21 January 2004). No one has yet been brought to justice for the attack.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Martín Barrios Hernández, his family, and that of the members of the Human and Labour Rights Commission of Tehuacán Valley, as a result of an alleged plan to kill Martín Barrios Hernández;

- calling for the authorities to take action to guarantee the safety of Martín Barrios Hernández, his family, and members of the Human and Labour Rights Commission of Tehuacán Valley, in accordance with their wishes;
- calling for an impartial, prompt and full investigation into the alleged threat on the life of Martín Barrios Hernández, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- reminding the authorities of their duty to carry out an independent and impartial investigation into the prosecution of Martín Barrios Hernández and the alleged fabrication of charges against him, with the results to be made public;
- reminding the authorities that the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms recognizes the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders and their right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals.

APPEALS TO:

State Governor of Puebla

Lic. Mario Marín Torres

Gobernador del Estado de Puebla

14 Oriente, No. 1006, Colonia El Alto, Puebla, México

Fax: + 52 222 213 8805

E-mail: gobernador@puebla.gob.mx

Salutation: Dear Gobernador/ Estimado Gobernador

Attorney General of Puebla

Maestra Blanca Laura Villeda Martínez

Procuradora General de Justicia del Estado de Puebla

Boulevard 5 de mayo y 31 Oriente, Colonia Ladrillera de Benitez, Puebla, Puebla, CP 72539, Mexico

Fax: + 52 222 240 8105

E-mail: titular.pgj@puebla.gob.mx

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Estimada Procuradora

Director of Human Rights – Interior Ministry

Dr. Ricardo Sepúlveda

Secretaría de Gobernación

Reforma 99, PISO 21, PH, Colonia Tabacalera, C.P. 06030, México D.F. México

Fax: + 52 55 51 28 02 34 (if someone answers say: "tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Dear Sir/Estimado Doctor

COPIES TO:

Human rights organization

Comisión de Derechos Humanos y Laborales del Valle de Tehuacán

Boulevard Héroe de Nacozary 210, Colonia Zaragoza, Tehuacán, C.P. 75770 Puebla, Mexico

Human rights organization

Centro de Derechos Humanos "Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez" A.C., (PRODH)

Serapio Rendón 57-B, Col. San Rafael, 06470, México D.F. Mexico

and to diplomatic representatives of Mexico accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 28 March 2006.