

PUBLIC

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19 August 2004

UA 251/04 Fear for safety/Human rights defender

MEXICO **Pedro Raúl López (m)**  
**His family**

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The president of the Chiapas State Human Rights Commission, Pedro Raúl López, has been suspended from his post by the State Congress, over allegations that he had obstructed investigations into the commission's finances. Amnesty International believes his suspension may actually be linked to his work investigating human rights violations by public officials in the state. He has been attacked and threatened before over his work in defence of human rights, and his family have also been intimidated so as to put pressure on him. Amnesty International is concerned for his safety and that of his family.

A few hours after he was suspended by the State Congress, state police agents (*agentes estatales de investigación*) reportedly detained his son-in-law, Moisés Cervantes Pérez. They took him to the office of the State Prosecutor (*Procuraduría General de Justicia del Estado*) in the city of Tuxtla Gutiérrez, where he was reportedly asked where Pedro Raúl López was. He was released without charge shortly afterwards. The same day, Pedro Raúl López's daughter Martha López Santiago was stopped in the street by unidentified men who reportedly searched her bag but left without taking anything.

State Police (*Agencia Estatal de Investigación*) vehicles have reportedly been keeping Pedro Raúl López's house and the office of the Chiapas CEDH under surveillance. The local authorities are also reportedly attempting to undermine the work of the local human rights organization *Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Bartolomé de las Casas*, by claiming it has overly close links with the CEDH.

The State Human Rights Commissions (*Comisiones Estatales de Derechos Humanos*, CEDH) are quasi-autonomous bodies appointed and funded by state authorities. Their role is to investigate allegations of official human rights abuses. The quality and independence of these bodies varies widely between the 31 Mexican states. The work of the Chiapas CEDH improved considerably after Pedro Raúl López was appointed in June 2001, according to local NGOs. The CEDH has been involved in the investigation of a number of complaints of human rights violations including alleged torture of indigenous people by state police. In January 2002 shots were fired at his house and he began receiving anonymous threatening phone calls. In October 2002 he was attacked and beaten by armed men who warned him to stop telling the state government to investigate human rights abuses by the security forces (See UA 18/02, AMR 41/004/2002, 17 January 2002, and follow-up, AMR 41/033/2002, 17 October 2002.) The attack and the anonymous threats, have apparently not been investigated.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Pedro Raúl López, President of the Chiapas State Human Rights Commission, and his family;
- urging the authorities to take action to protect Pedro Raúl López and his family, in accordance with their own wishes;
- pointing out that there appears to have been no investigation into the intimidation and attacks that Pedro Raúl López suffered in 2002, and calling for a thorough investigation into these and the recent intimidation of Pedro Raúl López and his family, with those responsible brought to justice;
- reminding the authorities that the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties

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:**

Governor of Chiapas

Pablo Salazar Mendiguchia  
Gobernador del Estado de Chiapas  
Palacio de Gobierno del Estado de Chiapas  
Av. Central y Primera Oriente  
Colonia Centro, C.P. 29009  
Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, México  
**Fax: + 52 961 612 0917**  
**Salutation: Dear Governor / Señor Gobernador**

Attorney General of Chiapas

Mariano Herrán Salvatti  
Procurador General de Justicia del Estado de Chiapas  
Libramiento Norte s/n  
Infonavit el Rosario  
Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, México  
**Fax: + 52 961 616 5724**  
**Salutation: Dear Attorney General / Señor Procurador**

President of the National Commission of Human Rights

Dr. José Luis Soberanes Fernández  
Presidente de la Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDH)  
Periférico Sur 3469, 5o piso  
Col. San Jerónimo Lídice  
México D.F. 10200, MÉXICO  
**Fax: + 52 55 5 6 81 84 90**  
**Salutation: Estimado Sr. Presidente / Dear President**

**COPIES TO:**

Human Rights NGOs

Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Bartolomé de las Casas  
Brasil# 14 Barrio Mexicanos  
CP 29240  
San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, México  
**Fax: +52 967 6783551 (ask for "tono de fax, por favor")**

Red Nacional de Organismos Civiles de Derechos Humanos, "Todos los Derechos para Todos"  
Patricio Sanz 449  
Col. Del Valle  
CP 03100 Delegación Benito Juárez  
Apartado Postal: A.P. 7-1479, CP 06700, México DF

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 1 October 2004.