

MEXICO

Mother and two sons tortured

Amnesty International is concerned at reports that two young peasant farmers and their mother were tortured by police during seven days in incommunicado detention.

Remedios Alonso Vargas and her two adult sons, Irineo Mederos Alonso and Luciano Mederos Alonso, were detained by some 40 agents of the Guerrero State Judicial Police (PJE), *Policía Judicial del Estado de Guerrero*, on 24 October 2000. The detention apparently took place without a judicial order. According to reports, the police entered a house in the village of El Camarón, municipality of Petatlán, and violently detained Remedios Alonso and her two sons, having accused them of kidnapping a man. The police also smashed belongings in the house and intimidated other inhabitants of the community.

The three detainees were reportedly beaten while being taken in a police vehicle to the headquarters of the PJE in Petatlán, where they were held incommunicado for two days. During this time they were insulted and threatened in an attempt to force them to confess to the kidnapping, of which the detainees claimed to have no knowledge.

On 26 October, the three detainees were transferred to the headquarters of the PJE in Ciudad Altamirano, Guerrero state, where they were then reportedly subjected to further torture. A bag was placed over Remedios Alonso's head, she was threatened with suffocation, and told that even worse would be done if she did not confess to the kidnapping. Irineo Mederos and Luciano Mederos were blindfolded and beaten with firearms on the back and neck. They also had bags put over their heads, were threatened with suffocation, and had carbonated water forced up their noses. Following their torture, Remedios Alonso and her two sons were forced to sign pre-prepared confessions which they claimed not to have read.

On 31 October the three detainees were transferred to a prison, the *Centro de Readaptación Social* (CERESO) of Coyuca de Catatlán. It was only at this point, seven days after they were detained, that they were brought before a judge in the Criminal Court of First Instance (*Juzgado de Primera Instancia en Materia Penal*) of Coyuca de Catatlán and a formal arrest warrant was issued. The Constitution of Mexico stipulates that a detainee accused of ordinary crimes must be brought before a judicial authority within 48 hours of detention.

From the moment of their detention on 24 October, relatives and their lawyer made repeated attempts to discover the whereabouts of Remedios Alonso and her two sons. Despite approaching the authorities in several places where they were rumoured to have been detained, they were not given access to the detained nor confirmation of their whereabouts.

Members of a non-governmental human rights organisation also reported facing obstacles in their attempt to visit the detainees on 8 November. The Director of the Coyuca de Catatlán prison apparently said that he had orders that no-one should be allowed to visit them. However, the human rights defenders were eventually given access to the detainees, and were able to take their testimonies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Amnesty International recommends to the Government of Mexico:

- that a prompt, impartial and effective investigation be conducted into the full circumstances surrounding the detention and reported torture of Remedios Alonso Vargas, Irineo Mederos Alonso and Luciano Mederos Alonso, following their detention by the Guerrero State Judicial Police on 24 October 2000;
- that the competent authorities seek without delay to identify the state agents implicated in the allegations of torture, and suspend them from their duties pending the findings of the investigation;
- that the methods and findings of the investigation be made public and those found responsible be brought to justice;
- that any statements and other evidence obtained through torture should not be invoked in any proceedings, except against the person or persons accused of torturing the three detainees.