

EXTERNAL

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UA 235/96

Fear of torture

7 October 1996

MEXICOREyna Avelino Huizache (f), peasant activist

On 1 October 1996 Reyna Avelino Huizache, one of the leaders of the *Organización Campesina de la Sierra del Sur* (OCSS), Southern Sierra Peasant Organization, a peasant organization in Guerrero state, was arrested by members of the *Policía Judicial Federal*, (PJF), Federal Judicial Police, in Acapulco. She was transferred to Chilpancingo, the state capital of Guerrero, for questioning at the *Procuraduría General de Justicia del Estado*, (PGE), State Attorney General's Office. During the night of 3 October she was transferred from Chilpancingo to Acapulco prison. Amnesty International fears that she is at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Reyna Avelino Huizache, who works in the Town Hall of Coyuca de Benitez, in Guerrero state, has been accused of taking part in the occupation of the Municipal Palace of Atoyac, Guerrero state on 18 May 1996. In her declaration before the penal judge on 2 October 1996 she pleaded innocent to the accusation. She has not been charged.

Reyna Avelino Huizache has been outspoken about the state government's failure to bring to justice those responsible for the massacre of peasants which took place near Coyuca de Benitez in June 1995 (see below). She told an Amnesty International delegation in June 1996 that in early 1996 she was repeatedly followed and her house was under surveillance.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 28 June 1995, Guerrero state security forces ambushed and killed 17 peasants and wounded 19 others in Aguas Blancas, near Coyuca de Benitez. The victims were among a large number of unarmed peasants, travelling to participate in a demonstration to demand the release of Gilberto Romero Vásquez, a peasant activist who had "disappeared" in Atoyac on 24 May 1995. Many of the victims belonged to the OCSS. In the following months many Municipal Palaces and Town Halls were occupied by peasants demanding a thorough investigation into the massacre. Some of the women, mostly widows of those massacred or witnesses to the killings, have been targeted and harassed.

An Amnesty International delegation, which visited Guerrero state in October 1995 and again in June 1996, met with members of the OCSS, including the widows and relatives of those massacred. Paula Galeana Balanzar, widow of Amado Sánchez, one of the peasants massacred, told the delegation that she and Amado Sánchez's 13-year-old son Carlos, have been repeatedly threatened and followed. Rocío Mesino, daughter of Hilario Mesino, who was arrested and tortured in prison on 3 July 1996, and Alba Elia Hurtado, a witness to the massacre, were subjected to kidnap attempts earlier this year (see UA 37/96, AMR 41/08/96, 15 February 1996 and *Overcoming fear: human rights violations against women in Mexico*, AMR 41/09/95, March 1996 pages 20-23).

Dozens of members of the OCSS and other peasant organizations in Guerrero have been killed in the context of disputes over peasants' rights since the creation of the OCSS in 1994.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern that Reyna Avelino Huizache appears to have been harassed and now arrested because of her non-violent activities with the *Organización Campesina de la Sierra del Sur* (OCSS), specifically in denouncing the participation of the state authorities in the massacre of 28 June 1995 in Aguas Blancas, Guerrero;
- calling for immediate measures to guarantee her safety while in prison and to grant her access to a lawyer and her family;
- calling for her to be promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence or released;
- urging the authorities to take measures to ensure the safety of all members of OCSS in Guerrero state and particularly of those whose activities relate to the massacre of 28 June 1995.

APPEALS TO:1) President of the Republic

Lic. Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León

Presidente de la República

Palacio Nacional, 06067 México D.F., MEXICO

Telegrams: Presidente Zedillo, México D.F., México**Telexes: 170937 sppnme; 1774468 sppnme****Faxes: + 52 5 271 1764, or 515 1794 or 542 1648 (voice line: ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")****Salutation: Sr. Presidente / Dear President**2) Attorney of the state of Guerrero

Lic. Antonio Hernández Díaz

Procurador del Estado de Guerrero

Carretera Nacional México-Acapulco Km. 6.300

CP 39.000, Chilpancingo, Guerrero, MEXICO.

Telegrams: Sr. Procurador, Guerrero, México**Faxes: + 52 747 223 28 (voice: ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")****Salutation: Sr. Procurador/ Dear Attorney**3) Interim Governor of the state of Guerrero

Ángel Heladio Aguirre Rivero

Gobernador Interino del estado de Guerrero

Palacio de Gobierno

Plaza Primer Congreso de Anahuac

39000 Chilpancingo, Guerrero, Mexico

Telegrams: Gobernador Aguirre, Chilpancingo, Guerrero, Mexico**Faxes: + 52 747 23072 (voice: ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")****Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor****COPIES TO:**1) Daily newspaper

Sr. Editor

La Jornada

Balderas 68

06050 México D.F., MEXICO

2) Peasant organization

Unión de Organizaciones de la Sierra Sur (UOSS)

attn: Ranferi Hernández Acevedo

Calle Zapata No. 1

Col. Fraccionamiento 20 de noviembre
Chilpancingo, Guerrero, MEXICO

and to diplomatic representatives of Mexico accredited to your country.

Like a number of governments, the Mexican authorities employ a large human rights bureaucracy, one task of which is to respond to public appeals, such as those generated by UAs. Those taking part in this UA should expect such a reply. In AI's experience, the Mexican authorities currently take little effective action beyond the paperwork to fully deal with AI's concerns, particularly impunity. However, given their sensitivity to international public opinion, UAs continue to be invaluable in confronting human rights emergencies in Mexico. Please forward replies to your Section or to the IS, where they will be monitored and acted upon. See also "Mexican Wave" (*UA NEWS*, ACT 60/01/96, March 1996).

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 30 November 1996.