

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Amnesty International concerned at treatment of hunger strikers in Chiapas

Amnesty International calls on the authorities to conduct a full review of the legal cases against indigenous prisoners on hunger strike in Chiapas since 29 September 2011. According to available evidence their detention, trial and convictions were marred by irregularities and abuses, including allegations of ill-treatment and torture. Amnesty International believes that they may have been subject to unfair trials and unsafe convictions. They should be retried according to international fair trial standards or released.

The organization is also concerned that the transfer on 20 October of one of the leading strikers, Alberto Patishtán Gómez, to a federal prison 2000 km away in Guasave, Sinaloa state, is in direct reprisal for his leading role in the hunger strike and human rights demands made by the prisoners.

Amnesty International is calling on federal and Chiapas state authorities to respect the right of inmates to carry out the peaceful hunger strike and to provide medical attention in accordance with the wishes of those participating in the protest and refrain from resorting to forced feeding. Forcible feeding of a mentally competent hunger-striker that is carried out without medical supervision, or before there is any plausible medical rationale for it is unjustifiable.

The organization is concerned that authorities have employed threats and intimidation in order to stop prisoners from continuing their protest. According to inmates, the only woman prisoner on strike, Rosa López Díaz, has been threatened with the removal of her young child from her care. Other participants have reported that they have been threatened with forced feeding.

Background Information

On 29 September 2011, 11 long standing indigenous prisoners in the state prison CERSS No 5 in San Cristobal de las Casas, began a hunger strike in protest against their continued imprisonment on the basis of criminal trials which they argue violated their fundamental rights and resulted in their conviction for crimes they did not commit. Two have since been released.

Amnesty International has repeatedly documented misuse of the criminal justice system in Chiapas and other states in which indigenous detainees are denied the right to effective defence and an impartial trial.