

UA 05/01

Fear for

MEXICOThe indigenous communities of Santiago Xanica and San Andrés Lovene,
Oaxaca state
Members of the Committee for the Defence of Indigenous Customs

The military has been harassing indigenous people from two communities in Oaxaca state, including members of a group working to promote and protect indigenous rights. Amnesty International is concerned for their safety.

The military has recently increased its presence in Santiago Xanica, an indigenous Zapotec community in the municipality of San Juan Ozolotepec, Oaxaca. Since 3 January soldiers have reportedly intimidated and interrogated people from the community. In particular, they have been asking for information about members of an indigenous rights group, the *Comité de usos y costumbres y derecho indígena*, Committee for the Defence of Indigenous Customs. Members of the group have previously been threatened, attacked and shot at, reportedly by supporters of the local ruling political party, the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), Institutional Revolutionary Party (see UA 44/00, AI Index AMR 41/08/00, 21 February 2000).

Since 5 January, soldiers have also reportedly ransacked a number of houses in the neighbouring community of San Lovene, stealing possessions and creating a climate of fear among the population. Inhabitants in Santiago Xanica fear that their homes may be targeted next.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There is significant military presence in Oaxaca, ostensibly to combat armed opposition groups and drug trafficking. Over the years there have been persistent reports of the military perpetrating human rights violations, mainly against members of the indigenous population.

Although the *Ley de Usos y Costumbres*, Law of Indigenous Customs, was passed in Oaxaca state in 1998, indigenous people are often denied their rights in practice, fueling conflict within communities. At the local level of government, the ruling PRI is reported to play an important role in protecting those responsible for human rights violations, allowing perpetrators to continue committing human rights violations with impunity.

A new federal government came to power in Mexico on 1 December 2000, and the President, Vicente Fox Quesada, has pledged to fully respect human rights.

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

- expressing concern that army troops have reportedly harassed indigenous people from the communities of Santiago Xanica and San Lovene in Oaxaca state and calling on the authorities to guarantee their safety;
- expressing concern for the safety of the indigenous communities and the members of the *Comité de la defensa de usos y costumbres*, asking that their safety is guaranteed;
- reminding the authorities of their obligation to ensure that the military carry out their work in line with international standards to protect human rights.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic
Lic. Vicente Fox Quesada
Presidente de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos
Palacio Nacional, Patio de Honor
Primer piso, Col. Centro
México D.F., C.P. 06067
MEXICO

Telegrams: President, Mexico D.F., Mexico
Fax: + 525 515 5729 / 277 2376
Salutation: Señor Presidente / Dear Mr President

Governor of Oaxaca State
Lic. José Murat Casab
Gobernador del Estado de Oaxaca
Palacio de Gobierno
Bustamente s/n
Oaxaca 68000
Estado de Oaxaca
MEXICO

Telegrams: Gobernador del Estado, Oaxaca
Fax: + 529 516 3737
Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor

Minister of the Interior
Lic. Santiago Creel
Secretario de Gobernación
Secretaría de Gobernación
Bucareli 99, 1er. piso, Col. Juárez
México D.F., C.P. 06699
MEXICO

Telegrams: Secretario de Gobernacion, Mexico D.F., Mexico
Fax: + 525 546 5350 / 546 7388
Salutation: Señor Secretario / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Network of Oaxaca
Alicia Mesa
Red Oaxaqueña de Derechos Humanos
c/o Centro de Derechos Humanos 'Los Príncipes'
González Ortega No415, Oaxaca 68000
Oaxaca, 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 20 February 2001.