

9 June 1999

Further information on UA 312/98 (AMR 41/44/98, 18 December 1998) - Human Rights in Jeopardy**MEXICO Nazareth and other communities in northern Chiapas**

Some 300 people have been forced to flee the community of Nazareth, in Chiapas state, and seek safety in the surrounding countryside, after the incursion of a force of over 1,000 members of the Mexican armed forces as well as the state and federal police on 3 June 1999.

In a public statement about the incursion, by a force which included 34 military vehicles, six public security lorries and 20 police vans, a member of the State Attorney General's office said "The operation was mounted to investigate the situation, since we had received reports of a road block near El Paraíso...However we found nothing." [*El operativo es para verificar la situación, ya que teníamos reportes de que existía un bloqueo del camino a la altura de El Paraíso...Pero no encontramos nada.*]

Amnesty International has received reports of similar operations in the communities of El Censo, Betania, Francisco Villa, Santa Lucía and La Garrucha. It is believed over 1,000 civilians, allegedly sympathisers of the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN), the Zapatista National Liberation Army, an armed opposition group, felt their safety was at risk and left their homes to seek safety elsewhere.

Amnesty International respects the Mexican government's right to maintain law and order, but stresses that this must be done strictly within the bounds of international standards. To this end the Inter American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), in its 1998 report on the country, stated that:

"...based on [the IACHR's] experience, it wishes to draw attention to the consequences of the use of the Armed Forces in functions involving the security of citizens, since this could lead to serious violations of human rights because of the military nature and the training received by the Armed Forces."

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has long been documenting reported acts of violence by the Mexican authorities against alleged supporters of the EZLN in the state of Chiapas. Last year saw a spate of military operations against supposed EZLN members in the communities of Taniperla, Diez de Abril, Amparo Aguatinta, Nicolás Ruiz, and El Bosque. This culminated in the arrest of 167 people in Nicolás Ruiz - most of whom have been subsequently released without charge - in an operation which lasted six hours and involved hundreds of police and soldiers in June 1998.

In the light of these and similar actions the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights concluded, in a 1998 report, that "the emergence of new dissident armed groups of various types has led not only to a resumption of measures of control by the security forces but also to the indiscriminate repression of social organisations and leaders".

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

- noting that members of the military and police forces have carried out large-scale incursion into several communities in the northern region of Chiapas state, including the community of Nazareth;
- calling on the authorities to take all the necessary measures to ensure that the security forces at present in Chiapas adhere strictly to international human rights standards.

APPEALS TO:

Governor of the State of Chiapas

Lic. Roberto Albores Guillén

Gobernador del Estado de Chiapas

Palacio de Gobierno, Piso 1, Col. Centro, 29000

Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Estado de Chiapas, MEXICO

Telegrams: Gobernador del Estado, Chiapas, México**Salutations: Sr. Procurador / Dear Governor**Attorney General of Chiapas

Lic. Jorge Hernández Aguilar

Procurador General de Chiapas

Procuraduría General de Chiapas

Tuxtla Gutierrez, Estado de Chiapas, MEXICO

Telegrams: Procurador del Estado, Chiapas, México**Faxes: + 52 961 65724 (if voice, ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")****Salutation: Sr. Procurador / Dear State Attorney General**Minister of Defence

Lic. Enrique Cervantes Aguirre

Secretario de la Defensa Nacional

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Fax: + 52 5 557 8963**Salutation: Señor Secretario/Dear Mr Secretary****COPIES TO:**Attorney General of the Republic

Lic. Jorge Madrazo Cuellar

Señor Procurador General de Justicia de la República

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Telegrams: Procuraduría General de la República, México DF, México**Faxes: + 52 5 626 4419****Salutation: Sr. Procurador / Dear Attorney**"Fray Bartolomé de las Casas" Human Rights Organization

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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 21 July 1999.