

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 41/11/98

This is a limited action. Please restrict appeals to 15 per section

EXTRA 17/98

Fear for arbitrary detention / Possible prisoners of

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MEXICO 180 International human rights monitors in Chiapas State

Amnesty International is concerned that foreign nationals attached to non-governmental human rights organisations visiting Mexico are at risk at being arbitrarily detained and expelled from the country.

An international delegation of 180 human rights observers is presently in Chiapas State to monitor the situation there, following the massacre of 45 people in Acteal, Chiapas, on 22 December 1997 (see UA 409/97, AMR 41/117/97, 23 December 1997). Amnesty International's concerns that foreign nationals observing the human rights situation in the country may be expelled have been heightened by the expulsion of Tom Hansen, a US citizen. On 18 February 1998, Tom Hansen, ex-director of Pastors for Peace, a non-governmental human rights organisation, was detained and later expelled from the country.

In the wake of the massacre, the authorities publicly declared that the concern showed by international human rights organisations in relation to the Acteal massacre constituted an interference in the domestic affairs of the country.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has documented numerous cases of international human rights monitors being expelled from Mexico in the context of their legitimate work for the protection of human rights (see Amnesty International's report: Mexico- The arbitrary expulsion of international human rights monitors, AMR 41/29/97).

In June 1993, Mexico, together with 120 other state parties adopted the Vienna Declaration at the United Nations (UN) World Conference on Human Rights (WCHR).

The spirit and wording of the Declaration clearly underlines the universality and indivisibility of human rights and recognises the role to be played by national governments, international governmental organisations, and both domestic and international non-governmental organisations in the protection of human rights. Article 38 of the Declaration states that '*Las organizaciones no gubernamentales deben ser dueñas de realizar sus actividades de derechos humanos sin injerencias, en el marco de la legislación nacional y de la Declaración Universal de Derechos Humanos*', 'non-governmental organisations should be free to carry out their human rights activities, without interference, within the framework of national law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.'

Amnesty International believes that the human rights situation in Mexico has sharply deteriorated over the past four years, and that by taking a position towards domestic and international human rights monitors which does not facilitate their legitimate work, the Mexican government is failing in its international commitment to implement the Vienna Declaration.

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

- expressing concern at the recent expulsion of Tom Hansen, ex-director of Pastors for Peace, from Mexico on 18 February 1998;

- calling for guarantees that all international human rights observers in Mexico be allowed to carry out their legitimate activities free from interference;
- expressing deep alarm at the level of harassment against all those who work in defence of human rights in Mexico, whether they be Mexican or foreign nationals.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Lic. Rosario Green Macías
Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores
Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores
Av. Ricardo Flores Magón No.1,
Col. Nonoalco Tlatelolco
06995 México D.F.
MEXICO

Faxes: + 52 5 782 4109

Salutation: Sra. Secretaria / Dear Minister

Governor of the State of Chiapas

Lic. Roberto Albores Guillén
Gobernador del Estado de Chiapas
Palacio de Gobierno, Piso 1
Col. Centro, 29000
Tuxla Gutiérrez
Estado de Chiapas
MEXICO

Faxes: + 52 961 20918

Salutations: Sr. Procurador / Dear Governor

COPIES TO:

Human rights organisation

Centro de Derechos Humanos
"Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez" A.C.
Serapio Rendon 57-B
Col. San Rafael, 06470
México D.F. MEXICO

and to diplomatic representatives of MEXICO accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.