

PUBLIC

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ÚA 204/98

Fear for safety / Possible extrajudicial execution

16 July 1998

MEXICO

Eusebio VÁZQUEZ JUÁREZ, peasant activist for OCSS and human rights defender - (murdered)

Benigno Guzmán Martínez, leading member of OCSS in detention
Bertoldo Martínez Cruz, leading member of OCSS in detention

José SÁNCHEZ SÁNCHEZ, OCSS and human rights lawyer

Other members of the OCSS peasant organisation

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of members of the *Organización Campesina Sierra del Sur* (OCSS) Southern Sierra Peasant Organisation, a network of peasant organizations in Guerrero State, following the recent death of one of their leaders, Eusebio Vázquez Juárez. These concerns are compounded by a climate of impunity and gross human rights violations in the state of Guerrero.

Witnesses reported seeing Eusebio Juárez being ambushed by eight men a few metres from his house in Tepetitla, in the state of Guerrero, on 9 July 1998 and then hearing a number of gun shots. Eusebio Vázquez Juárez was known as an active campaigner against the activities of paramilitary groups in the area and against human rights violations committed by the Mexican army.

Eusebio Vázquez Juárez's death follows an ongoing pattern of harassment against OCSS members by the government and security forces. This includes the arrest and detention of Benigno Guzmán Martínez and Bertoldo Martínez Cruz, two leading OCSS activists, earlier this year. Amnesty International believes that the charges against them are politically motivated and that they are prisoners of conscience targeted as a result of their OCSS-related activities. In May the organization issued an Urgent Action (see ÚA 167/98, AMR 41/26/98, 29 May 1998) on their behalf after their lives were threatened by other prisoners brandishing knives who had reportedly received orders from the prison director to kill them. Both men have come under pressure by judicial police to sign a declaration stating that the death of Eusebio Vázquez Juárez was the result of an internal dispute within the OCSS. Additionally they have been threatened with transferral from the municipal prison in Acapulco, Guerrero State to a high security federal prison though they have not been accused of any federal crimes.

The safety of José Sánchez Sánchez, a lawyer involved on various human rights cases for OCSS, may also be in question after he implicated the Governor of Guerrero in the killing of Vázquez Juárez. On 13 July he was summoned to appear at the State Attorney General's offices and informed that unless he could substantiate these claims he could face legal proceedings.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Members of the OCSS have frequently been subjected to gross human rights violations by members of the security forces in Guerrero State, including "disappearance", torture and extrajudicial execution. In July 1995, for instance, 17 peasants were gunned down in Aguas Blancas, Guerrero State in an ambush staged by Guerrero state police and government officials. Many of those killed were members of the OCSS (see ÚA 86/98, AMR 41/15/98, 17 March 1998; ÚA 110/97, AMR 41/24/97, 22 April 1997; and ÚA 172/97, AMR 41/42/97, 13 June 1997).

Since the massacre a wave of violence has swept through Guerrero State. On 28 June 1996, the first anniversary of the above massacre, the *Ejército Popular Revolucionario*, (EPR) Revolutionary Popular Army, an armed opposition group, made its first appearance. Since then an increasing number of security force members have arrived in Guerrero State, sparking continuous reports of threats, intimidation and ill-treatment of people from local communities, mainly indigenous peasants, as the security forces searched their homes and vehicles for weapons and EPR members. This culminated with the massacre in El Chareo, in Guerrero State, on 7 June 1998 where 11 people were killed and 23 detained (see UAF 173/98, AMR 14/29/98, 9 June 1998).

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

- calling for an immediate investigation to be opened into the killing of Eusebio Vázquez Juárez on 9 July 1998 and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- requesting that measures be taken by the authorities to guarantee the safety of all members of the *Organización Campesina Sierra del Sur* (OCS), Southern Sierra Peasant Organisation;
- expressing alarm at the number of cases of gross human rights violations carried out against members of the OCS, reportedly by members of the security forces as well as paramilitary groups.

APPEALS TO:

Governor of Guerrero State

Lic. Ángel Eladio Aguirre Rivero
Gobernador del Estado de Guerrero
Palacio de Gobierno
Plaza Central, Primer Congreso de
Anahuac
Chilpancingo 39000
Estado de Guerrero
MEXICO

Telegrams: Gobernador del Estado, Guerrero, Mexico

Faxes: + 52 747 28319

Salutations: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor

Attorney General of Guerrero State

Lic. Servando Alanís Santos
Procurador del Estado de Guerrero
Carretera Mexico-Acapuleo Km. 6300
Chilpancingo 39000
Estado de Guerrero
MEXICO

Telegrams: Procurador del Estado, Guerrero, Mexico

Faxes: + 52 747 22328 (if voice, please ask "me puede dar tono de fax por favor")

Salutations: Sr. Procurador / Dear State Attorney

COPIES TO:

Comité de Derechos Humanos
"La Voz de los sin voz"
20 de noviembre No.37
Coquea de Benítez, Guerrero, 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 1 September 1998.