

EXTERNAL

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Fear for Safety

29 July 1997

MEXICO

**Juan Juárez Pérez, Indian activist
José López Hernández, Indian activist
and 50 families from the municipality of Sabanilla,
Chiapas**

At least four people, including children, have been killed by members of the paramilitary group *Paz y Justicia* (Peace and Justice) in the last month in the municipalities of Sabanilla and Tila, Chiapas State. There has been a recent escalation in attacks and threats by this group targeted at the families of activists of the *Partido de la Revolución Democrática* (PRD), Party of the Democratic Revolution, a legal opposition party. Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of more than 50 indigenous families from communities in the municipality of Sabanilla, many of whom have had to flee in fear for their lives.

Paz y Justicia which has accused PRD militants of killing one of its leaders has threatened all PRD members in the region with death, by issuing a statement: "*para cada priísta muerto, serán enterrados cinco zapatistas*", "for every dead priísta, five *zapatistas* will be buried".

Local people, including José López Hernández and Juan Juárez Pérez, whose son Benito, (12), was amongst those killed by *Paz y Justicia*, explained that they feared they would be killed if they stayed. They have informed the organization that *Paz y Justicia* have since blocked the way out of Sabanilla to prevent more families from leaving the area.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International is seriously concerned about the worsening human rights situation in the state of Chiapas involving escalating levels of harassment, threats and attacks directed against the peasant communities by paramilitary groups, in particular *Paz y Justicia* acting on behalf of local chiefs linked to the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), Institutional Revolutionary Party, the ruling party. Alarming, such activities are carried out with the acquiescence and tacit support of the authorities, whereby most of those responsible remain unpunished.

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

- calling for immediate measures to guarantee the safety of all the inhabitants of the municipality of Sabanilla and neighbouring areas in northern Chiapas;
- urging a prompt, full and impartial investigation into recent killings in the area;
- calling for effective measures to be taken to disband the paramilitary group *Paz y Justicia* in the state of Chiapas, and to bring all those responsible to justice.

APPEALS TO:

1) Minister of the Interior
Lic. Emilio Chuayffet Chemor
Secretario de la Gobernación
Secretaría de la Gobernación
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Salutation: Sr. Secretario/Dear Minister

2) Governor of the State of Chiapas

Lic. Julio César Ruiz Ferro
Gobernador del Estado de Chiapas
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Fax: + 52 961 20917 (if voice,ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador/Dear Governor

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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 9 September 1997.