

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 41/83/97

UA 297/97

Fear for safety

9 September 1997

MEXICOMaría Estela García Ramírez (f), aged 24, and her family

María Estela García Ramírez has been forced to flee her home in Oaxaca State in the face of recent threatening incidents linked to the murder of her husband, allegedly by members of the police. She fears that her family or her husband's family may become the target of reprisals in her absence.

On 20 August 1997, while attending a meeting of indigenous women in Altimirano, Guerrero State, an unidentified man approached María Estela García Ramírez.

He began to interrogate her about a formal complaint she had made before the Attorney General of Oaxaca State against members of the judicial police concerning the murder of her husband, Severino Jiménez Almaraz (see below).

When she left, she was followed by the same man in a car that did not bear any numberplates. Previously, on 14 August 1997 a number of heavily armed men had gone to her mother's house asking in a threatening manner where María Estela García Ramírez was, stating that they wanted to talk to her about the same complaint. María Estela García Ramírez has since fled to Mexico City in fear for her safety.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 23 April 1997 more than 60 agents of the state judicial police arrived at the house of Severino Jiménez Almaraz, a local peasant activist. Severino was brutally beaten and shot in the back of his leg. Although seriously injured, he managed to escape from the house but was closely followed by the police.

On 25 April María Estela filed a complaint before the state Attorney General who informed her that her husband had died in an armed confrontation with the police. The same day, an unidentified group of heavily armed men visited the community where the family of María Estela lives, asking where she was.

Amnesty International has documented an alarming number of human rights abuses committed by members of the security forces in the Loxicha region of Oaxaca State (see UA 265/97, AMR 41/74/97, 11 August 1997 and follow-up AMR 41/81/97, 29 August, for the most recent case). Zapotec indigenous activists have been targeted for their presumed involvement with the *Ejército Popular Revolucionario* (EPR), Popular Revolutionary Army, an armed opposition group operating in the area. Since June 1996 at least 130 people have been arbitrarily detained, principally in the penitentiary of Santa María de Ixcotel, Oaxaca State. Amnesty International fears that they are all at serious risk of torture and has called for the unconditional release of those who have been accused on unfounded charges of having links to the EPR.

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

- urging that immediate measures be taken to ensure the physical safety of María Estela García Ramírez, of her family and of members of the family of Severino Jiménez Almaraz;

- calling for a prompt and thorough investigation into the apparent extrajudicial execution of Severino Jiménez Almaraz and for those responsible to be brought to justice;

- expressing concern at these killings and at the continuing human rights violations in the region of San Agustín Loxicha, Oaxaca State;

if possible, also:

- calling for the unconditional release of all those who have been detained on unfounded charges of having links with the EPR.

APPEALS TO:

1) **Minister of Interior**

Lic. Emilio Chuayffet Chemor
Secretario de Gobernación
Secretaría de Gobernación
Bucarelli 99, 1er piso,
Col Juarez, 06699 México DF, MEXICO

Telegrams: Secretario de Gobernación, México DF, México

Faxes: + 52 5 546 5350; + 525 535 9952

Salutation: Sr. Secretario / Dear Minister

2) **Governor of the state of Oaxaca**

Lic. Diódoro Carrasco Altamirano
Gobernador del Estado de Oaxaca
Palacio de Gobierno
Oaxaca, Oaxaca, MEXICO

Telegrams: Gobernador Carrasco, Oaxaca, Mexico

Faxes: + 52 951 637 37 (If voice, ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor)

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Organisation

Acción de los Cristianos para la Abolición de la Tortura
(ACAT)

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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 23 October 1997.