

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 41/115/97

UA 398/97

Fear for safety

19 December 1997

MEXICOAlba Hurtado Arias (f), aged 17, peasant activist

Rocío Mesino Mesino (f), peasant activist, human rights defender

Alba Hurtado Arias was detained on 10 December 1997, Human Rights Day, by members of the Mexican army in Tepetixtla, Guerrero state. She was taken to Coyuca de Benitez, where she was interrogated by soldiers claiming to be members of military intelligence. She was questioned about the activities of Rocío Mesino Mesino, a leading member of the *Organización Campesina de la Sierra del Sur (OCSS)*, Southern Sierra Peasant Organization, a peasant organization. The soldiers warned Alba Hurtado Arias, who is also an OCSS member, that she would be imprisoned if they saw her in Tepetixtla again. They accused her of having links to the *Ejército Popular Revolucionario (EPR)*, Popular Revolutionary Army, an armed opposition group. She was released after the interrogation.

The incident, which forms part of a pattern of intimidation and other human rights violations against members of the OCSS (see below), has raised fears for the safety of both Alba Hurtado Arias and Rocío Mesino Mesino.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Dozens of members of the OCSS and other peasant organizations in Guerrero have been killed in the context of disputes over peasants' rights since the creation of the OCSS in the Tepetixtla mountains in 1994. Nineteen-year-old Gerardo Hurtado Arias was shot dead on 20 April 1997, the ninth OCSS member to be killed for political reasons in 22 months (see UA 110/97, AMR 41/24/97, 22 April 1997).

OCSS members, including Rocío Mesino Mesino, have been the target of death threats, reportedly by paramilitary groups, because of their activities for the indigenous and peasant population in the region and because of their outspoken criticism of the government.

The OCSS offices were raided in June 1997 by unidentified armed individuals looking for, among other things, Rocío Mesino Mesino's home address (see UA 172/97, AMR 41/42/97, 13 June 1997). In September two members of the Mexican armed forces raped and tortured a 19-year-old woman Gloria Roque Bautista, while trying to force from her information about the activities of the OCSS leadership, including Rocío Mesino Mesino.

Rocío's father, Hilario Mesino Acosta, an OCSS leader arrested on 3 July 1996, was tortured and threatened with the "disappearance" and death of Rocío and her sister Norma Mesino, also a leading peasant activist in Guerrero. Hilario Mesino remained in prison as a prisoner of conscience on unfounded charges of having links with the EPR until 21 June 1997, when he was released after the courts decided there was no evidence to substantiate the charges.

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

- calling for an immediate and thorough investigation into the detention and intimidation of Alba Hurtado Arias on 10 December 1997, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- calling for immediate measures to ensure the safety of Alba Hurtado Arias and of leaders of the *Organización Campesina de la Sierra del Sur (OCSS)*, in particular Rocío Mesino Mesino;
- expressing deep concern that members of the OCSS remain unable to carry out their legitimate political and human rights activities free from fear for their

safety and liberty, and calling for immediate and effective measures to remedy this.

APPEALS TO:

1) Attorney General of the Republic

Lic. Jorge Madrazo Cuéllar
 Procurador General de la República
 Procuraduría General de la República
 Paseo de la Reforma y Violeta
 Col. Guerrero, 06300 México D.F., MEXICO

Faxes: +52 5 626 4419

Telegrams: Procurador General, Mexico, Mexico

Salutation: Sr. Procurador General / Dear Attorney General

2) Attorney General of the State of Guerrero

Lic. Antonio Hernández Díaz
 Procurador del Estado de Guerrero
 Carretera Nacional México-Acapulco Km. 6.300
 CP 39.000, Chilpancingo, Guerrero, MEXICO.

Faxes: + 52 747 223 28 (if voice ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

Telegrams: Procador del Estado, Chilpancingo, Guerrero, Mexico

Salutation: Sr. Procurador/ Dear State Attorney General

3) Interim Governor of the State of Guerrero

Ángel Heladio Aguirre Rivero
 Gobernador Interino del Estado de Guerrero
 Palacio de Gobierno
 Plaza Primer Congreso de Anahuac
 39000 Chilpancingo, Guerrero, MEXICO

Faxes:+ 52 747 23072 (if voice ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

Telegrams: Gobernador Interino, Chilpancingo, Guerrero, Mexico

Salutation: Sr Gobernador Interino / Dear Interim Governor

COPIES TO:

1) Human Rights Organisation

Comité Nacional Independiente
 Pro-defensa de presos perseguidos y exiliados (CNI)
 Apartado postal 7-887
 06700 México D.F., MEXICO

Fax: + 52 5 785 9756

2) Peasant Organisation

Unión de Organizaciones de la Sierra Sur (UOSS)
 Calle Zapata No.1
 Col. Fraccionamiento 20 de noviembre
 Chilpancingo, 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 10 February 1998.