

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 41/29/96

27 June 1996

Further information on UA 157/95 (AMR 41/14/95, 4 July 1995) - Fear for safety

MEXICO

Bishop Arturo Lona Reyes, human rights activist

Amnesty International is once again concerned for the safety of Bishop Arturo Lona Reyes of the Diocese of Tehuantepec, Oaxaca, a renowned human rights activist and founder of the local *Centro de Derechos Humanos Tepeyac*, Tepeyac Human Rights Centre.

On 19 June 1996 Bishop Lona Reyes was falsely accused in the local media by members of the ruling *Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, Institutional Revolutionary Party, of supporting armed groups in the region. In 1995, following a defamatory campaign against him, led by those linked to local powerful landowners, Bishop Lona Reyes was subjected to death threats for his human rights work on behalf of the local peasant and indigenous population.

On 29 June 1995 he survived, unharmed, an armed attack on the vehicle he was driving in a remote area of Oaxaca (see original Urgent Action).

Amnesty International fears that, although unfounded, the latest accusations against the Bishop may signal a new wave of threats and attacks for his human rights work.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As Bishop Lona Reyes acknowledged in a letter to Amnesty International at the time, the threats against him in 1995 ceased following a campaign on his behalf, including UA 157/95, led by Amnesty International. The organization also received a letter from the *Centro de Derechos Humanos Tepeyac*, which offered "*greetings from the whole staff of the Tepeyac Center, with warm wishes for the success of all your efforts on behalf of human rights. We were pleased to learn that AI has sent out an urgent appeal (UA 157/95) following the attempt on the life of Arturo Lona Reyes, Bishop of Tehuantepec and President of the Tepeyac Center. We too are concerned for his safety (and are own) given the climate of attacks against the Church and especially its defence of the human rights of indigenous people.*"

Members of the Catholic Church and other grassroots organizations have been active in promoting and protecting the rights of the poorest sectors of the Mexican population, including peasants and the indigenous, for decades. They have frequently encountered opposition from local authorities and large landowners.

The harassment and intimidation of government critics and human rights monitors is one of Amnesty International's main concerns in Mexico at present. 1996 has seen a huge increase in harassment against human rights defenders, most of whom are being targeted because of their work on behalf of the community.

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

- expressing serious concern for the safety of Bishop Arturo Lona Reyes following the latest campaign of unfounded accusations against him due to his human rights work;
- calling for a prompt and thorough investigation into the false accusations, and for effective measures to guarantee Bishop Arturo Lona Reyes' safety and

the safety of all other members of the *Centro de Derechos Humanos Tepeyac*.

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, MÉXICO

Telegrams: Secretario de Gobernación, México DF, México

Faxes: + 52 5 546 5350

Salutation: Sr. Secretario/ Dear Minister

2) Governor of the State of Oaxaca

Lic. Diodoro Carrasco Altamirano

Gobernador del Estado de Oaxaca

Palacio de Gobierno

Oaxaca

Estado de Oaxaca, MÉXICO

Telegrams: Gobernador del Estado, Oaxaca, Mexico

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor

COPIES TO:

1) *Centro de Derechos Humanos Tepeyac*

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Oaxaca, México

Telephone: + 52 971 50060; 11950; 50355

Faxes: +52 971 51442

2) Centro de DD.HH.

Miguel Agustín Pro-Juárez (PRODH)

Puebla No 153, Col Roma

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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 20 August 1996.