

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear for safety

23 June 1995

MEXICO Rodolfo Izal Erloz, Spanish national, Roman Catholic parish priest
Loren Rieve Estrella, US national, Roman Catholic parish priest
Jorge Barón Gutlein, Argentine national, Roman Catholic parish priest

On 22 June 1995, the three Roman Catholic priests named above were reportedly arrested, without warrant, by members of the Republic Attorney General's Office, *Procuraduría General de la República* (PGR). Their whereabouts currently remain unknown. Concern for their safety has been heightened by reports that Rodolfo Izal Erloz and Loren Rieve Estrella have received death threats in the recent past, apparently for their advocacy of human rights for the local indigenous population.

According to reports Father Rodolfo Izal was detained at 3.30pm on 22 June in a PGR road block between his parish in Sabanilla and the town of Yajalón, Chiapas. Hours later Father Loren Rieve was arrested in the same place when he enquired about the whereabouts of his colleague. Father Jorge Barón Gutlein was also arrested by members of the PGR in a road block near his parish in Venustiano Carranza, Chiapas.

The Republic Attorney General's Office acknowledged the detentions on the same day, alleging the priests were arrested following unspecified complaints from neighbours and for infringing migration laws, without giving any details about the specific causes for the arrests, nor the whereabouts of the detainees.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The arrests of the three priests appears to be the latest in a series of threats and attacks against the Roman Catholic Church and human rights activists monitoring the human rights situation in Chiapas, following the 1 January 1994 indigenous uprising. Members of the Catholic Church and other grassroot organizations have been active in promoting and protecting the rights of the indigenous population of Chiapas and other states with large indigenous minorities, for many decades. They have frequently encountered opposition from the local authorities and large landowners.

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

- expressing serious concern about the reportedly illegal arrests of Fathers Rodolfo Izal Erloz, Loren Rieve Estrella and Jorge Barón Gutlein on 22 June 1995;
- calling for their whereabouts to be made known and seeking assurances that they are being treated in accordance with international standards;
- seeking full clarification of the reasons for their arrests, and urging that they be charged with recognizably criminal offences or immediately released.

APPEALS TO

1) President of the Republic

Lic. Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León
Presidente de la República
Palacio Nacional
06067 México D.F., México

Telegrams Presidente Zedillo, Mexico D.F, México

Faxes: +52 5 271 1764

Salutation: Sr. Presidente/Dear President

2) Interior Minister

Lic. Esteban Moctezuma Barragán

Secretario de Gobernación

Secretaría de Gobernación

Bucareli 99, 1er piso

Col. Juárez

06699 México DF, MÉXICO

Telegrams: Secretario de Gobernación, México D.F., México

Faxes: +52 5 592 0014

Salutation: Sr. Secretario de Gobernación/Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Organization

Sres.

Centro de Derechos Humanos

San Bartolomé de las Casas

5 de Febrero No. 6

San Cristóbal de las Casas

29200 Chiapas, México

Faxes +52 967 83551

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 8 August 1995.