

PUBLIC

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UA 282/08 Fear for safety

MEXICO Miguel Hidalgo indigenous community, Chiapas state

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On 3 October, members of the indigenous community of Miguel Hidalgo, La Trinitaria municipality, witnessed a police operation which ended with the killing of 6 people and wounding of 17. Amnesty International fears that they may be at risk of retaliation and intimidation.

On the morning of 3 October, a group of about 40 state police officers entered the community of Miguel Hidalgo with the apparent intention to arrest community leaders responsible for organising the occupation of the Mayan Chinkultic ruins, a nearby archaeological site and tourist attraction. The inhabitants resisted the police intervention by surrounding the officers, disarming them and detaining them in the community centre. In the afternoon, a larger police operation, comprising of about 300 officers, entered the community firing guns and teargas canisters. Two protesters were killed and 17 injured. The inhabitants of the community responded by throwing stones.

According to eyewitnesses, Agustín Alfaro Alfaro, who lives near Miguel Hidalgo community, went there with his wife and son in order to transport some of those who were injured to a hospital. On route, Agustín Alfaro's van was shot at by a police car and stopped. Agustín Alfaro, who had been hit in the leg, was then made to get out of the van and was shot in the chest. The police then proceeded to shoot four other people who were in the van. Agustín Alfaro and three other men died on the spot.

On 6 October, the state Governor publicly apologised to the victims and families for the 3 October police operation. He also announced the arrests of some police officers implicated in the shootings and an investigation into the operation. Relatives of the victims were also offered some financial and social assistance.

Despite the initial positive steps by the governor, Amnesty International is concerned that witnesses to the events of 3 October may be at risk of intimidation and threats in order to deter them, relatives and community members from seeking justice. Concern is heightened by the fact that in some previous cases documented by Amnesty International, prosecutions of police for serious human rights violations have led to threats and intimidation to victims and witnesses.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:**

- calling for eye-witnesses to the human rights violations committed by police during the operation in Miguel Hidalgo, la Trinitaria municipality on 3 October to receive effective protection to prevent intimidation or threats;
- calling for a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the police operation which resulted in the killing of six community members, for those responsible to be brought to justice and for the findings of the investigation to be made public;
- calling on the authorities to ensure victims and relatives receive full reparations via an appropriate legal process to establish the responsibility of state institutions for the human rights violations committed;
- calling on the authorities to ensure all eviction and police operations against communities meet international human rights standards on the minimum use of force and other related international human rights standards.

**APPEALS TO:**Governor of Chiapas

Lic. Juan José Sabines Guerrero  
Gobernador del Estado de Chiapas  
Palacio de Gobierno, 1º piso, Col. Centro,  
C.29000, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, México

**Fax:** +52 961 618 8050. You will then be asked for an extension number, type in: 21122

**Email:** [juansabines@chiapas.gob.mx](mailto:juansabines@chiapas.gob.mx)

**Salutation:** Dear Governor/Señor Gobernador

Minister of Justice of Chiapas state

Lic. Amador Rodríguez Lozano  
Ministro de Justicia del Estado de Chiapas  
Libramiento Norte s/n, tercer nivel  
Col. Infonavit "El Rosario", CP 29049  
Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, México

**Fax:** + 52 961 61 657 24

**Email:** [arodriguez@mje.chiapas.gob.mx](mailto:arodriguez@mje.chiapas.gob.mx)

**Salutation:** Dear Minister/ Señor Ministro

Human Rights Commission of Chiapas

Lic. Juan Carlos Moreno Guillén  
Presidente de la Comisión de los Derechos Humanos de Chiapas  
Comisión de los Derechos Humanos de Chiapas  
Boulevard Comitán 143, Col. Moctezuma  
Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, México

**Fax:** +52 961 639 6615 (if someone answers, say: "me da tono de fax, por favor")

**Salutation:** Dear President/ Señor Presidente

**COPIES TO:**Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human Rights Centre

Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, A.C.  
Calle Brasil 14, Barrio Mexicanos, 29240 San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, México

**Email:** [accionurgente@frayba.org.mx](mailto:accionurgente@frayba.org.mx)

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 26 November 2008.