

PUBLIC

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17 December 2004

UA 337/04 Fear for safety

MEXICO Marco Antonio Suástegui Muñoz (m), architect

One of the leaders of a group campaigning against the building of a hydroelectric dam in southern Mexico has apparently been followed and received anonymous death threats, and Amnesty International believes his life may be in danger.

Marco Antonio Suástegui Muñoz is a leading member of the *Consejo de Ejidos y Comunidades opositoras a La Parota* (CECOP), a group opposed to the construction of the "La Parota" hydroelectric dam in the municipality of Acapulco, Guerrero State.

On 2 December he received a phone call from a man who said he knew where Marco Antonio Suástegui Muñoz and his sisters lived, and the route they travel to work. The man insulted and threatened him, and warned him to "calm down or we will finish you off" (*bájale los huevos porque te vamos a dar para abajo*). On 9 December, as he was boarding a bus after he had been to court in connection with his activities in opposition to the building of the dam, he noticed that he was being followed by an unmarked car with three armed men inside. When he got off the bus, the driver of the car reportedly tried to run him over. When he got home, he saw the car again, parked outside. It drove off shortly after he got home.

Marco Antonio Suástegui Muñoz was arrested in July 2004 after a meeting in Aguacaliente, one of the communities affected by the construction of the dam. He and another member of CECOP are accused of "illegally confining" (*privación ilegal de libertad*) one of the five officials who came to the meeting from the national power company, the *Comisión Federal de Electricidad* (CFE), which is responsible for the construction of the hydroelectric dam. Both men deny the charges, and they are free on bail pending the outcome of a judicial investigation. Amnesty International has written to the state and federal authorities expressing concern that the charges may be politically motivated, intended to deter protests against the construction of the dam.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The construction of the La Parota dam has divided local communities, with some accepting compensation for the destruction of their land, and others strongly opposed. The CECOP started its activities against the construction of the dam in January 2003, fearing that the project would flood more than 14,000 ha., threatening the livelihood of 20 farming communities. The CFE carried out some consultation with local community representatives about the construction of the dam, but the CECOP have claimed that the consultation process deliberately excluded people opposed to the dam and misled others, resulting in an unfair and untransparent process.

Political activists, human rights defenders and others opposing construction projects like this dam, or campaigning against local political bosses (*caciques*) often suffer threats or malicious prosecution, particularly in states such as Guerrero and Oaxaca.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Marco Antonio Suástegui Muñoz and his family, who have received death threats;

- asking for assurances that the authorities take all necessary measures to protect Marco Antonio Suástegui Muñoz and his family, in accordance to his wishes, and to ensure he is able to carry out his legitimate activities without harassment;
- asking for a prompt, full and impartial investigation of the threats, with the results made public.

APPEALS TO:

Head of the unit for the promotion and defence of human rights at the Interior Ministry

Maestro Ricardo Sepúlveda Iguinez
Titular de la Unidad para la Promoción y Defensa de Derechos Humanos
Secretaría de Gobernación
Reforma 99, Piso 21, PH
Colonia Tabacalera
06030, México D.F., MEXICO

Fax: + 52 55 51 28 02 34
+ 52 55 51 28 02 24
+ 52 55 5584 2731

Salutation: Dear Sir/Estimado Maestro

Governor of Guerrero

Lic. René Juárez Cisneros
Gobernador del Estado de Guerrero
Palacio de Gobierno, segundo piso
Plaza Central, Primer Congreso de Anahuac
Colonia Centro
Chilpancingo 39000
Guerrero, MÉXICO

Fax: +52 747 47 2 4596 (ask, 'el tono de fax, por favor)
+52 747 47 2 3125 (direct line)

Email: secretariaparticular@prodigy.net.mx, secretariaparticular@guerrero.gob.mx

Salutation: Señor Gobernador/Dear Governor

Attorney General of Guerrero

Lic. Jesus Ramirez Guerrero, Procurador General de Justicia del Estado de Guerrero
Carretera Nacional México-Acapulco Km. 6+300
Tramo Chilpancingo- Petaquillos, Chilpancingo 39090, Guerrero, Mexico

Telegrams: Procurador General de Justicia del Estado, Guerrero, Mexico

Fax: + 52 747 47 22328

Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Señor Procurador

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Mexico accredited to your country.

Lic. Alfredo Elías Ayub
Director General de la Comisión Federal de Electricidad
Rio Rodano 14, Col. Cuauhtemoc
06598 México D. F., MEXICO

Fax: +52 55 5310 4614

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 28 January 2005.