

£MEXICO

@Detention, ill-treatment and threats against student leaders

Amnesty International has received information about the detention, ill-treatment and threats against student leaders at the San Luis Potosí University, San Luis Potosí State, in the central region of Mexico, apparently as a result of their participation in peaceful political activities.

On the morning of 4 January 1991, Juan Carlos Rodríguez Flores, a student leader at the San Luis Potosí University in the town of San Luis Potosí, San Luis Potosí State, was arrested without warrant outside his home by members of the Grupo Especial de la Policía Judicial del Estado, Special Group of the State Judicial Police. According to eye-witness reports, he was badly beaten during the arrest. Juan Carlos was reportedly detained without an arrest warrant. That same day the police acknowledged his detention in the San Luis Potosí headquarters, but reportedly denied him access to a lawyer and relatives. On 5 January, a public notary presented an amparo de incomunicación, a habeas corpus appeal against the incommunicado detention. Incommunicado detention is forbidden by the Mexican Constitution. Later that same day, the police denied Juan Carlos was being kept in the police headquarters and said they had no information about his whereabouts. Juan Carlos remained "disappeared" until 8 January, when he was presented by the police to the local Ministerio Público, Attorneys' Office, in San Luis Potosí, from where he was transferred to the town's penitentiary. He was released on bail that same day. Charges of damage to private property which had been brought against him were subsequently dropped.

While he was held in incommunicado detention Juan Carlos was allegedly kept blindfolded, denied food and repeatedly threatened. After his release Juan Carlos was examined by a doctor who found lesions consistent with the allegations of beatings and ill-treatment.

Juan Carlos Rodríguez Flores is a student leader in the Facultad de Comercio, Faculty of Commerce, of the local University and is an active member of the Organización Estudiantil Independiente, Independent Students Organization, and of the Comisión Organizadora de la Universidad Campesina, Peasant University Organization Committee, in the town of San Luis Potosí. According to reports, before his detention he had received several death threats because of his role as a student activist. His arrest is believed to be part of an intimidation campaign by local authorities against student activism.

According to reports, 12 other student leaders of the local University have recently received threats for their participation in peaceful political activities, and arrest warrants have apparently been issued against some of them, including Israel Mendoza, Felipe Cañizales and Blas Salazar Cardozo, Presidente del Consejo Estudiantil de la Preparatoria Dos, President of the Student Council of a local training college.

In the light of the frequent reports of human rights abuses by law-enforcement agents in Mexico, including torture and ill-treatment, "disappearances" and extra-judicial executions, in some cases purportedly directed against political activists of opposition movements, Amnesty International believes that a thorough investigation into the threats, incommunicado detention and ill-treatment suffered by Juan Carlos Rodríguez Flores should be conducted immediately, as well as into the threats suffered by other student activists in San Luis Potosí, and that those responsible should be brought to justice.