

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 41/04/97

31 January 1997

Further information on UA 122/96 (AMR 41/22/96, 9 May 1996) and follow-up (AMR 41/63/96, 11 October) - Fear for safety

MEXICO **Father Camilo Daniel, Catholic priest, human rights activist**
Mary Pérez de Soto (f), parish secretary of the above
 Camilo Soto Pérez, Mary's son
 Anita Soto Pérez (f), Mary's daughter

On 29 January 1997 Mary Pérez de Soto, the church secretary to Father Camilo Daniel, a well-known human rights activist in Chihuahua state, let it be known that she and her two children were in hiding on an isolated farm.

Mary Pérez took this action after a series of anonymous letters and phone calls threatened the life of her son, Camilo Soto Pérez, and that of Father Camilo Daniel, if the priest continued his work as president of the *Comisión de Solidaridad y Defensa de los Derechos Humanos A.C.*, COSYDDHAC, Commission for Solidarity and the Defence of Human Rights.

Between 13 and 27 January Mary Pérez received five phone calls threatening the deaths of her son and the priest. Mary fled with her children on 27 January leaving a note for Father Camilo saying: "*Tengo much miedo por usted y por el niño. Busque protección para usted.*" (I am very afraid for you and the child. Seek protection for yourself).

Since then members of COSYDDHAC have been on hunger-strike in the central square of the city of Chihuahua demanding respect for constitutional and individual rights in the state.

Mary Pérez de Soto, her family and Father Camilo Daniel are at the moment all still well, but the isolation of Mary Pérez's hiding puts her and her family in great danger. No action has been taken by the authorities to investigate the death threats and therefore there is still grave concern for their safety.

Since 9 May 1996, when Amnesty International issued UA 122/96, no one has been charged with making the earlier threats against those named above.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

COSYDDHAC has been active in the defence of human rights in the state of Chihuahua for many years, often coming into conflict with local authorities because of its complaints against abuses allegedly committed by the state security forces.

Last year some people close to Father Daniel Camilo, who have had a long relationship with COSYDDHAC, were also threatened. These include Javier Ávila and Ricardo Robles, both Jesuits and members of COSYDDHAC. Members of the Catholic Church and other grassroots organizations have been active in promoting and protecting the rights of the indigenous population in Mexico for many decades. They have frequently encountered opposition from the local authorities and large landowners. Church and human rights activists monitoring the human rights situation in states with large indigenous minorities or peasants, have faced a series of threats and attacks. The impunity that those responsible enjoy is central to the worsening human rights situation in Mexico and is recorded in the Amnesty International document: *Central America and Mexico: Human Rights Defenders on the Front Line* (AMR 02/01/96).

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

- expressing serious concern for the safety of Mary Pérez de Soto, Camilo Soto Pérez, Anita Soto Pérez and Father Camilo Daniel, following renewed threats against them;
- expressing concern that no-one has been brought to justice for earlier threats made in 1996, and calling for a prompt and thorough investigation into the campaign of intimidation and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- urging the government to take immediate measures to guarantee the safety of Father Camilo Daniel, Mary Pérez de Soto, Camilo Soto Pérez and Anita Soto Pérez and the safety of human rights activists and church members in Mexico.

APPEALS TO

1) President of the Republic

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

Telegrams: Presidente Zedillo, México D.F., México

Telexes: 170937 sppnme; 1774468 sppnme

Faxes: + 52 5 271 1764

Salutation: Sr. President/Dear President

2) Governor of the State of Chihuahua

Lic. C. Francisco Barrio Terrazas
 Gobernador del Estado de Chihuahua
 Palacio de Gobierno
 Ciudad Juárez
 Estado de Chihuahua, MEXICO

Telegrams: Gobernador, Barrio Terrazas, Chihuahua, México

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador/Dear Governor

3) Minister of the Interior

Lic. Emilio Chuayffet Chemor
 Secretario de la Gobernación
 Secretaría de la Gobernación
 Bucareli 99, 1er piso
 Col. Juárez, 06699 México DF, MÉXICO

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

Faxes: + 52 5 546 5350

Salutation: Sr. Secretario/Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

1) Human rights organization

Sres. Comisión de Solidaridad y Defensa de los Derechos Humanos AC.
 Calle 24 esq. con Terrazas #3007
 Col. Pacífico CP. 31030
 Chihuahua, MEXICO

e-mail: cosyddhac@infosel.net.mx

Faxes: +52 1415 0486 (if voice, ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

2) Daily newspaper

Sr. Editor

La Jornada
Balderas 68
06050 México D.F., México

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 25 March 1997.