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@Continuing human rights violations against members of the Tzeltal indigenous community in Chiapas

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Amnesty International is seriously concerned about reports of recent of human rights violations against members of Tzeltal indigenous communities of the municipality of Ocosingo in the State of Chiapas.

This impoverished area has a long history of land tenure conflicts between peasants and landowners. Amnesty International has reported the arbitrary detention and torture of members of the same Tzeltal indigenous community during similar incidents in the past. For example, in March 1990 several members of the Tzeltal community of Chalam del Carmen were arbitrarily arrested and brutally tortured by the security forces in the context of a forced eviction from their village. Those arrested included men and women who were charged with several criminal offenses, but later released free of charges following growing public outcry about the incident.

According to recent information received by the organization, on 6 June 1993 at 6am more than 1000 members of the state security forces including *Seguridad Pública*, Public Security, *Policía Judicial del Estado*, state judicial police and *Caballería*, a branch of the armed forces, raided the peasant villages of Chalam del Carmen, Río Florido, Nuevo Sacrificio, Eden del Carmen and El Carrizal.

Members of the security forces reportedly arrived in approximately 100 vehicles and a helicopter belonging to the government of Chiapas state. They were allegedly

accompanied by local landowners. The remarkably large group arbitrarily arrested 23 peasants including three elderly men aged between 80 and 102 and two minors aged 15 and 14.

Their names are:

Eliseo López Gómez López	Héctor	Santiz
Sebastian López Gómez, 80 Santiz	Antonio	López
Moisés Gómez Santiz Santiz, 15	Diego	López
Victor López Gómez Gomez	Gustavo	Santiz
Juan Santiz Gómez Gómez, 90	Epitacio	López
Agustín López Gómez Gómez	Manuel	Santiz
Daniel Santiz López Santiz	Mauricio	López
Felipe López Santiz Santiz	Alonso	López
Mariano López Santiz Santiz (son)	Mauricio	López
Domingo López Gómez, 102 Santiz, 14	Jorge	López
Jorge Santiz López Rodríguez	Sebastian	Santiz
Domingo López Gómez		

According to a number of testimonies, several people including women and children suffered beatings during the raid. Members of the security forces reportedly destroyed more than 100 houses, stole peasants' belongings, tools, clothes, radios, tape recorders and money, which belonged to the "Chalam del Carmen store" and funds to electrify the village "Nuevo Sacrificio".

The 23 detainees were taken to Cerro Hueco prison in Tuxtla Gutiérrez where they remained for three days and allegedly suffered torture including having alcohol forced into the nostrils, beatings and electric shocks. They were forced to sign confessions in Spanish despite the fact that some, including the elderly, did not speak the language. According to reports, one of the peasants, Domingo López Gómez of 102 years of age, was seriously ill as a consequence of the torture suffered.

The peasants were then transferred to Ocosingo prison where most are still being held under several charges including homicide, illicit association and causing injuries. According to reports these charges are unfounded.

On 25 June, three of the detainees were released for lack of evidence: Domingo López Gómez, 102 years-old, who had to be taken to hospital due to the beatings received when subjected to torture; Epitacio López Gómez, 90 years-old and Sebastián López Gómez, 80 years-old. Jorge López Santiz, 14 years-old and Diego López Santiz, 15 years-old were transferred to a juvenile detention centre in Berriozábal.

Amnesty International is deeply concerned about reports of continuous human rights violations against members of indigenous communities in Mexico, despite repeated announcements by national and local authorities that such abuses would not be tolerated and that those responsible would be brought to justice. Amnesty International is asking the authorities to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into all the reported abuses following the raid on the Tzetal villages on 6 June 1993. United Nations has declared 1993 The International Year for the World's Indigenous People.

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