

UA 73/02

Torture /

MEXICO Valentina Rosendo Cantu (f), aged 17
Fidel Bernadino Sierra (m), her husband

Ezequiel Sierra Morales (m), municipal delegate
Encarnación Sierra Morales (f), community representative

Facundo Sierra Morales (m)
Pedro Sierra Morales (m)
Silvano Presciliano Vazquez (m)
Pablo de la Cruz Vazquez (m)
Arnulfo Anastasio Flores (m)
Candido Garcia Gutierrez (m)
Raul Apolo Bernadino (m)
Anastasio Cruz Garcia (m)

(All members of the Tlapaneca ethnic group, living in Acatepec municipality,
Guerrero State)

Members of the Mexican army allegedly beat and sexually assaulted 17-year-old Valentina Rosendo Cantu on 16 February, near her home in Guerrero state, southern Mexico. They told her they would kill the other villagers named above. Amnesty International is concerned for their safety.

Valentina Rosendo Cantu was apparently washing her clothes near her house in the village of Barranca Bejuco, Acatepec municipality, when about eight soldiers approached her. They asked her where "los encapuchados" (the hooded ones) were. Members of armed opposition groups active in the region usually wear hoods to conceal their identity. One of the soldiers put his rifle to her chest while another read out 11 names from a list. One of those on the list was her husband. All are from her village, except for Candido Garcia Gutierrez and Anastasio Cruz Garcia, who are from nearby Acalmani. Valentina Rosendo said that she did not know them, and the soldier reportedly then hit her in the stomach with his rifle. The soldiers reportedly said that if she did not tell them they would kill the 11. The two soldiers then allegedly sexually assaulted Valentina Rosendo.

Two days later, her husband, Fidel Bernadino Sierra, took her to see a doctor at the Health Centre in Caxitepec. They asked the doctor for a medical certificate describing her injuries, but he reportedly refused because he was scared of reprisals. Later they travelled to a hospital in the nearest town to be examined. On 26 February, the couple reported the assault to the National Commission for Human Rights (*Comision Nacional de Derechos Humanos*, CNDH). They were assisted by representatives of a local indigenous rights organisation, the Independent Organisation of Mixtec and Tlapanec Communities (*Organización Independiente de Pueblos Mixtecos-Tlapanecos*, OIPMT). To Amnesty International's knowledge the CNDH has not begun any investigation. They have not ordered a medical examination of Valentina Rosendo, risking the loss of vital evidence.

The military authorities at first denied that any soldiers had been in the area at the time of the alleged assault, but the military prosecutor has since reportedly opened an investigation. However, the *Procuraduría General de la Republica* (PGR), the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic has apparently not taken any action yet. There is serious concern about the

impartiality of the military investigation, given the failure to effectively investigate previous cases.

On 2 March soldiers reportedly went to Barranca Bejuco and fired in the air to intimidate the villagers.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There is a heavy military presence in many parts of Guerrero state, ostensibly to combat armed opposition groups and drug trafficking. This, together with the presence of armed opposition groups, has contributed to the grave human rights situation in the state. Over the years there have been persistent reports of soldiers committing human rights violations including torture and extrajudicial killings. The system of military justice that investigates and tries such cases virtually ensures impunity for all those responsible.

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

- expressing concern at reports that 17-year-old Valentina Rosendo Cantu was beaten and sexually assaulted by soldiers on 16 February, in Barranca Bejuco, in Guerrero state;
- expressing concern that the soldiers reportedly threatened to kill those named in the list and calling for a prompt, independent and exhaustive investigation into the circulation of this list and the threats;
- expressing concern for the safety of all those named on the list, and urging the authorities to do everything necessary to guarantee their safety;
- urging the authorities to order a prompt and thorough investigation by the civilian authorities into the alleged assault on Valentina Rosendo Cantu, with the findings made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that all serious human rights violations allegedly committed by the armed forces are investigated by civilian authorities.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic
 Lic. Vicente Fox Quesada
 Presidente de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos
 Residencia Oficial de "Los Pinos"
 Col. San Miguel Chapultepec
 México D.F., C.P. 11850
 MÉXICO

Telegrams: President, Mexico D.F., Mexico
Fax: (+525 55) 515 1794 / 516 9537
Salutation: Señor Presidente / Dear Mr President

Attorney General of the Republic
 General Rafael Marcial Macedo de la Concha
 Procurador General de la Republica
 Procuraduría General de la República
 Reforma Norte esq. Violeta 75
 Col. Guerrero
 Delegación Cuauhtémoc
 México D.F., C.P. 06300
 MEXICO

Telegrams: Procurador General, Mexico D.F., Mexico
Fax: (+525 55) 346 0983 / 346 2776
Salutation: Señor Procurador General / Dear Attorney General

President of the National Commission of Human Rights

Dr. José Luis Soberanes Fernández
Presidente de la Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDH)
Periférico Sur 3469, 5o piso
Col. San Jerónimo Lídice
México D.F. 10200
MÉXICO

Telegrams:Presidente de la CNDH, Mexico D.F., MEXICO

Faxes:(+525 55) 135 0595 / 681 7199 / 668 0767

Salutation:Estimado Sr. Presidente / Dear President

Minister of National Defence

Gral. Gerardo Clemente Ricardo Vega García
Secretario de la Defensa Nacional
Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional
Bulevar M. Ávila Camacho esqu. Industria Militar S/N
Col. Lomas de Sotelo
Delegación Miguel Hidalgo
México D.F., C.P. 11640
MEXICO

Telegrams:Secretario de la Defensa Nacional, Mexico D.F., Mexico

Fax: (+525 55) 395 2935 / 557 8963

Salutation:Señor Secretario / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Organisation

Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña Tlachinollan, A.C
Calle Mina No.26
Colonia Centro
CP 41304 Tlapa, Guerrero
MEXICO

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 23 April 2002.