

UA 159/95 "Disappearance" / Fear for safety / Possible extrajudicial executions

5 July 1995

MEXICO "Disappeared": Gilberto ROMERO VAZQUEZ, peasant activist

Killed:

Tomás POFIRIO  
 Amado SANCHEZ  
 Fabián GALLARDO  
 Francisco RANGEL or ROGEL  
 Pasito HERNANDEZ  
 Daniel LOPEZ CASTANEDA  
 Victorino FLORES  
 Climaco MARTINEZ  
 Paz HERNANDEZ GONZALEZ  
 Mario PINEDA  
 Andrés REFUGIO  
 Antonio ABARCA SANTANERO  
 Gregorio ANALCO TABARES  
 Florente RAFAEL VENTURA  
 Simplicio MARTINEZ REZA  
 and two others, names unknown

Fear for safety:

Benigno GUZMÁN MARTÍNEZ  
 José Ascencio DOMÍNGUEZ  
 Héctor PONCE RADILLA  
 David MOLINA

Gilberto Romero Vázquez reportedly "disappeared" in Atoyac de Alvarez, Guerrero state, on 24 May 1995. Seventeen peasants seeking clarification of his whereabouts were killed nearby by security forces on 28 June. Amnesty International fears that in the current atmosphere, further serious human rights violations may be committed against the peasant community in Guerrero state.

Following the "disappearance" of Gilberto Romero Vazquez, a peasant activist from San Martin de las Flores in Guerrero state, local peasants, including women and children, decided to organize a demonstration on his behalf. Many of the peasants belong to the *Organización Campesina de la Sierra del Sur* (OCSS), Southern Sierra Peasant Organization.

On 28 June, as the peasants were travelling in lorries to Atoyac de Alvarez, near Acapulco, to attend the demonstration, the state police stopped them at a checkpoint in the village of Aguas Blancas, Coyuca de Benitez municipality. Some 300 police officers then reportedly opened fire on the lorries for some 15 minutes.

Seventeen people were killed in the attack, 14 died immediately and another three in hospital. At least 19 were wounded. A doctor who attended the wounded at the scene reported that at least six were in a critical condition. He stated that he saw no evidence that the peasants were carrying firearms.

According to reports, guns were later planted at the scene by the police in an attempt to cover up the indiscriminate killing of unarmed people.

Since the incident, hundreds of police have reportedly arrived in the area, and there have been reports of threats and intimidation against members of the local communities. OCSS leaders, Benigno Guzmán Martínez and José Ascencio Domínguez, are currently in hiding in fear for their safety. Local political activists, Héctor Ponce Radilla and David Molina, members of the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), who have denounced the police attack of 28 June, have also received threats.

On 1 July, the Guerrero State Attorney General, Antonio Alcocer, accused two state chiefs of police and eight state police officers of manslaughter and abuse of authority in the murder of the 17 peasants.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Guerrero state has long been the scene of human rights violations by the security forces, mainly in the context of land disputes. The most frequent victims of this violence are indigenous people and peasants. The frequent association of powerful landowners (*caciques*) to local authorities seriously undermine the legal rights of the peasants and place them at higher risk of human rights violations.

On 22 May 1995, a group of mostly Mixteco indigenous people peacefully took over the residence of Armando Ramos, President of Tlacoachistlahuaca municipality and reportedly also a "*cacique*". The protesters were demanding improvements to their living conditions and an end to corruption in the municipality. This was followed by threats, harassment and attacks against peasant activists. Three Mixtecos, Perfecto Gonzalez Rufino, Alejandro Tenorio Perfecto and Rey Flores Hernandez were killed during June in Tlacoachistlahuaca. They were members of *Consejo Guerrerense 500 años de Resistencia Indígena*, Guerrero State Council for 500 years of Resistance.

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

- urging a prompt and full investigation into the "disappearance" of Roberto Romero Vazquez;
- expressing serious concern about the use of excessive force and the reported extrajudicial killings by the members of the Guerrero state police on 28 June;
- calling for a prompt and thorough investigation into the attack, and for those police responsible, some of them who have already been named by the Attorney General, to be brought to justice;
- expressing serious concern for the safety of Benigno Guzmán Martínez, José Ascencio Domínguez, Héctor Ponce Radilla and David Molina, and calling for guarantees for their safety.

#### **APPEALS TO**

1) Lic. Ruben Figueroa Alcocer  
 Gobernador del Estado de Guerrero  
 Palacio de Gobierno  
 Plaza Primer Congreso de Anahuac  
 Chilpancingo, Guerrero  
 Mexico C.P. 39000

**Faxes: +52 747 23072 or + 52 747 23007 (voice line: ask "me puede dar tono de fax por favor")**

**Telegrams: Gobernador Alcocer, Guerrero, Mexico**

**Salutation: Sr.Gobernador/Dear Governor**

2) President of the Republic

Lic. Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León  
 Presidente de la República  
 Palacio Nacional  
 06067 Méxixco 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**

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 5 592 0584; 592 0014**

**Salutation: Sr. Secretario/Dear Minister**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**1) Daily newspaper

Sr. Editor  
*La Jornada*  
 Balderas 68  
 06050 México D.F., México

2) Human Rights Organization

Comite Nacional Independiente  
 Pro-defensa de Presos , Perseguidos,  
 Desaparecidos y Exiliados Politicos (CNI)  
 Apartado Postal 7-887  
 Codigo Postal 06700  
 Mexico D.F.

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 17 August 1995.