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£MEXICO

@Soldiers rape three Tzeltal women - investigations transferred to military courts

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Amnesty International is seriously concerned that judicial investigations into the reported rape of three Tzeltal women in June 1994 have been transferred to military jurisdiction. The army has already rejected the allegations against the soldiers and there is little likelihood that a fair and impartial hearing will take place or that those responsible will be brought to justice.

María Teresa Méndez Santiz, aged 20, Cristina Méndez Santiz, 18 and María Méndez Santiz, 16, were reportedly raped by soldiers at a roadblock near Altamirano in the south-eastern state of Chiapas, Mexico on 4 June 1994. The women were detained and accused of participating in the attack on Altamirano, one of the towns taken by the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*, EZLN, Zapatista National Liberation Army, at the beginning of the year. While in custody, the women were beaten and then raped by about 10 soldiers.

Representatives from local human rights organizations submitted a complaint about the incident to the Public Ministry (*Ministerio Público*) on 30 June 1994. On 7 September 1994, a lawyer representing the three women together with representatives from local human rights organizations who had been called to the Military Public Ministry to testify,

complained about the transfer of the case to military jurisdiction. They also protested that they had been given no notification that the case had been transferred. According to reports, they were subjected to intimidation during the hearing at the Public Ministry by members of the security forces.

Amnesty International calls on those responsible to guarantee that a full and impartial investigation is carried out in a civilian court to determine responsibilities for the rape of the three Tzeltal women and to ensure that those involved are brought to justice. The organization fears that there is little likelihood that military courts will conduct an impartial investigation. Furthermore, Amnesty International believes that the continuing impunity afforded to those responsible for gross human rights violations in Chiapas will promote the continuation of such incidents.

This document is a follow-up to one issued in August called *Members of the Mexican army rape three Tzeltal women, AI Index: AMR 41/12/94*.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS: Please send courteously worded letters and faxes either in good Spanish or in your own language:

- expressing serious concern at the transfer of the case to military jurisdiction;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation to take place without any further delay and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- expressing concern about the reported harassment of representatives of the victims and calling for guarantees for their physical safety.

Appeals to:

1) President of the Republic

Lic. Carlos Salinas de Gortari

Presidente de la República

Palacio Nacional

06067 México D.F., Mexico

Telegrams: Presidente Salinas, México D.F., Mexico

Telexes: 170937 sppnme; 1774468 sppnme

Faxes: +52 5 271 1764

Salutation: Sr. Presidente/Dear President

2) Interior Minister

Dr Jorge Carpizo McGregor

Secretario de Gobernación

Secretaría de Gobernación

Bucarelli 99, 1er piso

Colonia Juárez

06669 México DF, MEXICO

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

Telexes: 1774376, 1774375

Faxes: +52 5 592 0014

Salutation: Sr. Secretario de Gobernación/Dear Minister

3) Attorney General's Office

Lic Humberto Benítez Treviño

Procurador General de la República

Procuraduría General de la República

Paseo de la Reforma y Violeta

Colonia Guerrero

06300 Mexico DF, MEXICO

Telegrams: Procurador General, Mexico D.F., Mexico

Telexes: 1777572

Faxes: +52 5 526 8506

Salutation: Sr Procurador General/Dear Attorney General

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

1) National Human Rights Commission

Sres.

Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos

Periférico Sur 3469

Col San Jerónimo Lídice

10200 México DF, Mexico

2) Human rights organization

Sres.

CONPAZ - Coordinación de organismos

no gubernamentales por la paz en Chiapas

Chapa de Corzo 19

El Cerrillo, San Cristóbal de las Casas

29220 Chiapas, Mexico

3) Women's organization

Grupo de Mujeres de San Cristóbal de las Casas

c/ Rivera 5

Barrio de Tlaxcala

San Cristóbal de las Casas

29210 Chiapas, Mexico

Please send your appeals right away and remember to direct any responses you receive to the Mexico Desk at the International Secretariat. This action is to continue until the end of December.

KEYWORDS: IMPUNITY / INVESTIGATION OF ABUSES / SEXUAL ASSAULT / WOMEN / JUVENILES / INDIGENOUS PEOPLES / MILITARY /