

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 41/34/96

EXTRA 103/96

Fear for safety / Fear of torture

5 July 1996

MEXICO Hilario Mesino Acosta, peasant activist
Benigno Guzmán Martínez, peasant activist
Marino Sánchez Flores, peasant activist
and other members of the OCSS in Guerrero state

Amnesty International is deeply concerned for the safety of members of the *Organización Campesina de la Sierra del Sur* (OCSS), Southern Sierra Peasant Organization, a peasant organization in Guerrero state whose members have suffered attacks and death threats in connection with their activities on behalf of the local indigenous and peasant population.

Since the massacre of 17 peasants on 28 June 1995 in Aguas Blancas in an ambush staged by Guerrero state police and government officials (see UA 159/95, AMR 41/15/95, 5 July 1995, and follow-ups AMR 41/16/95, 26 July and AMR 41/18/95, 17 August), a wave of violence has swept through the state. The climate of violence has intensified since 28 June 1996, when relatives and OCSS members held a memorial service commemorating the massacre, at which a previously unknown armed opposition group, the *Ejército Revolucionario Popular*, ERP, the People's Revolutionary Army, made an appearance.

Although the ERP and the OCSS have made public statements denying any links between them, the government has launched a campaign against members of the OCSS for belonging to the ERP (see NWS 118/96, AMR 41/31/96, 28 June). On 28 June 1996, the Governor of Guerrero state issued warrants against several members of the OCSS and some of its leaders, including Hilario Mesino Acosta, Benigno Guzmán Martínez and Marino Sánchez Flores, apparently for belonging to the ERP. The three reportedly left Guerrero state and went into hiding, in fear for their safety given the climate of systematic human rights violations and impunity prevailing in Guerrero.

However, on 3 July Hilario Mesino Acosta, one of the founders and leader of the OCSS, was arrested by members of *Procuraduría General de la República*, PGR, Attorney General's Office, as he left the OCSS offices in Mexico City after giving an interview to a well-known national newspaper about the critical situation in Guerrero. He was then handed over to authorities in Chilpancingo, the state capital of Guerrero, and transferred to prison. He was reportedly held incommunicado until 9.00am on 4 July, when he was allowed access to the phone. He has apparently been accused of sedition and conspiracy (*sedición, conspiración*), among other offences. Amnesty International fears that he may face torture in prison.

Amnesty International's concerns have also been heightened by reports that thousands of soldiers have, since 28 June, been sent to Guerrero state.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

An Amnesty International delegation, who visited Guerrero state and met with members of the OCSS in October 1995 and again in June 1996, was able to confirm the reports of violent repression against human rights workers, who have been active in promoting and protecting the rights of the poorest sectors of the Mexican population, particularly peasants and indigenous people (see EXTRA 91/96, AMR 41/26/96, 11 June 1996).

The organization believes that the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of human rights violations is the main reason for the intolerable persistence of these abuses against human right activists.

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

- expressing serious concern for the safety of Benigno Guzmán Martínez, Marino Sánchez Flores and several other members of the OCSS in Guerrero State, reportedly harassed in connection with their activities on behalf of the local indigenous and peasant population;
- expressing deep concern about the arrest of Hilario Mesino Acosta and seeking absolute guarantees of his physical safety while in detention, urging that he be charged with a recognizable criminal offence or released;
- calling for a definitive investigation into the massacre of 28 June 1995 so that **ALL** those found guilty are brought to justice, as many of those allegedly responsible have continued to benefit from impunity;
- expressing deep alarm about continuing human rights violations in the state of Guerrero, and the apparent lack of effective action to stop them and to end the impunity currently enjoyed by most perpetrators.

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 but preferably to + 52 5 515 1794 or 542 1648 (voice line: ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Sr. Presidente / Dear President

2) Attorney of the state of Guerrero

Lic. Antonio Hernández Díaz

Procurador del Estado de Guerrero

Carretera Nacional México-Acapulco Km. 6.300

CP 39.000, Chilpancingo, Guerrero, MEXICO.

Telegrams: Sr. Procurador, Guerrero, México

Faxes: + 52 747 223 28 (voice line: ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Sr. Procurador/ Dear Attorney

3) Interim Governor of the state of Guerrero

Ángel Heladio Aguirre Rivero

Gobernador Interino del estado de Guerrero

Palacio de Gobierno

Plaza Primer Congreso de Anahuac

39000 Chilpancingo, Guerrero, Mexico

Telegrams: Gobernador Aguirre, Chilpancingo, Guerrero, Mexico

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

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor

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1) Daily newspaper

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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 10 August 1996.