

22 October 1998

Further information on UA 115/98 (AMR 41/21/98, 15 April 1998) and follow-up (AMR 41/22/98, 21 April 1998) - Possible Prisoners of Conscience / Fear for Safety

MEXICO

| | | |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Still detained: | Tomás Sánchez Gómez) | Members of the Tzeltal |
| | Antonio López Vázquez) | indigenous group and |
| | Sebastián González) | community activists |
| New name: | Tomás Sánchez López) | |
| | Luis Menéndez Medina) | Student |
| | Sergio Valdez Ruvalcaba) | University teacher |
| | Miguel Hernández Pérez) | Members of the church based NGO |
| | Manuel Hernández Pérez) | "Fray Pedro Lorenzo de la Nada", |
| | located in Ocosingo, Chiapas State | |
| Freed on bail: | Nicolás Mazariiego Pérez) | Members of the Tzeltal |
| | Nicolás López Vázquez) | indigenous group and |
| | Mateo González López) | community activists |
| | Justino Sánchez López) | |
| | Andrés Gutiérrez Hernández) | |
| | Fidelino Cruz Mendoza) | Member of NGO mentioned above |
| New names: | Antonio Rodríguez Jiménez) | Community activists |
| | César Rodrigo Núñez Olivas) | |

Eight of the above-named 16 people arrested by Mexican security forces in mid-April 1998 were recently released on bail. However, the charges against them have not been dropped and no evidence has been provided to justify the continuation of legal proceedings against them.

Concerns remain for the other eight people arrested at the time, who are still detained in the Cerro Hueco prison, in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas State. Although they have been charged with various offences, as far as Amnesty International knows no evidence has been provided to substantiate these.

Key witnesses brought forward by the authorities to justify the detentions have since retracted their testimonies. At least one of the witnesses was reportedly beaten by the security forces before signing a statement they had not been allowed to read.

On a recent Amnesty International mission to Mexico, delegates visited the Cerro Hueco prison, and were able to interview a number of the detainees, who continued to profess their innocence. In Amnesty International's view their arrests were politically motivated and the detentions flawed with procedural irregularities.

In light of the continued attacks by the Mexican armed forces against members of 'autonomous municipalities' in the state of Chiapas, Amnesty International sees the arrests of the above 16 people as part of a widespread pattern of arbitrary detentions in the State. Amnesty International believes that the detentions in Taniperla and other similar joint military/police operations in Chiapas State are intended to intimidate whole communities considered by the authorities to be supporters of the *Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*, (EZLN), Zapatista National Liberation Army.

On 22 December 1997, 45 displaced indigenous peasants were reportedly massacred in Acteal, Chiapas, by paramilitary groups associated with the state authorities (see

UA 409/97, AMR 41/117/97, 23 December 1997). Since then, members of the armed forces have conducted arbitrary searches in Chiapas, entering areas controlled by the EZLN in violation of agreements between the government and the EZLN. This has intensified the militarization of the region on both sides.

No new information has been received regarding the 190 indigenous women from the community of Taniperla, who were featured in the first follow-up to this UA.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/e-mails/faxes/express/airmail letters in Spanish or in your own language:

- urging that consistent and substantial evidence be brought to support the charges against those who remain detained six months after their arrest (name them), and against those who have been released on bail;
- urging that, if no such evidence is found, that those detained be promptly released and the charges against all 16 people be dropped;
- expressing deep concern at the detention of civilians peacefully expressing their political beliefs in favour of the establishment of autonomous municipalities;
- expressing your support for the work of human rights defenders, and citing the recommendation of the United Nations' Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, of 20 August 1998, which calls for: '...promoting the action of human rights defenders and guaranteeing their safety';
- reminding the government of Mexico of its commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 9: "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile."

APPEALS TO:

Governor of the State of Chiapas

Lic. Roberto Albores Guillén

Gobernador del Estado de Chiapas

Palacio de Gobierno, Piso 1, Col. Centro, 29000

Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Estado de Chiapas, MEXICO

Telegrams: Gobernador del Estado, Chiapas, México

Faxes: + 52 961 20918

Salutations: Sr. Procurador / Dear Governor

Attorney General of Chiapas

Lic. Jorge Hernández Aguilar

Procurador General de Chiapas

Procuraduría General de Chiapas

Tuxtla Gutierrez, Estado de Chiapas, MEXICO

Telegrams: Procurador del Estado, Chiapas, México

Faxes: + 52 961 65376 (if voice, ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Sr. Procurador / Dear State Attorney General

COPIES TO:

Comite de Derechos Humanos "Fray Lorenzo de la Nada"

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