

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 0001 GMT 9 NOVEMBER**

## **Mexico: General Gallardo – five years of unjust detention must come to an end**

On the fifth anniversary of the arrest of prisoner of conscience General José Francisco Gallardo, Amnesty International remains convinced that he is still being persecuted for his views. "General Gallardo should be immediately and unconditionally released," the organization said.

General Gallardo's detention on 9 November 1993 is believed to be the result of his proposal to create the post of human rights ombudsman within the armed forces.

"Military courts in Mexico do not constitute an independent and impartial tribunal in cases of human rights violations, and this encourages impunity and continued abuses," the organization added.

As an example, Amnesty International points to an incident in El Charco, Guerrero, in which 11 people were killed by the army. Five months have passed, and there is still no indication that the Military Prosecutor's Office, *Ministerio Público Militar*, is carrying out a satisfactory investigation.

Amnesty International considers that all cases of possible violation of human rights by military personnel, including that of the villagers at El Charco, should fall under civilian jurisdiction.

### **Background**

In September, an Amnesty International delegation requested to visit General Gallardo in the Military Camp Number 1 in Mexico City, the capital. The delegation received no reply from the military authorities and was turned away when it went to the military base on a normal visiting day. Two weeks later the delegation was allowed to make the visit – accompanied by a representative of the Foreign Ministry, *Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores* – but only after media reports and political pressure had made the military authorities reverse their decision.

In a clear act of retaliation, immediately after the visit guards raided General Gallardo's cell removing books and magazines that the delegation had brought him. They also removed letters of support from Amnesty International members and copies of the resolutions of the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights (IACHR), recommending that he be released.

Amnesty International also regrets the failure by the Mexican government to attend the IACHR audience in October which reviewed progress in the implementation of the Commission's recommendations for the protection of human rights in Mexico. ENDS.../

**For further information or to arrange an interview, please phone Amnesty International's Press Office on +44 171 413 5566**