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Mexico: Montiel and Cabrera, the fight for justice goes on

Upon welcoming the release of Rodolfo Montiel and Teodoro Cabrera after they had been unjustly jailed for two and a half years, Amnesty International said today that the fight to obtain justice for the two peasant ecologists would not end at the prison gates.

The release of Rodolfo Montiel and Teodoro Cabrera, who were imprisoned in Iguala in Guerrero State, was ordered yesterday by President Fox for "humanitarian reasons", under article 75 of the Federal Penal Code.

"However positive President Fox's decision may be, it leaves Rodolfo Montiel and Teodoro Cabrera only half way down the road in their search for justice" Amnesty International commented, while explaining that, although they have been given their freedom, the fact that they were innocent and that they have suffered torture and injustice since they were arrested in May 1998 has not been acknowledged.

*"Much still remains to be done in this case," Amnesty International stressed while expressing full support for the statements made by Rodolfo Montiel and Teodoro Cabrera and their lawyers from the *Centro de Derechos Humanos Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez (PRODH)*, Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Centre, saying that they will continue with their efforts, both at national and international level, to prove their innocence, to bring to trial those responsible for the abuses they suffered and to be granted appropriate reparation.*

"Only by securing full justice for Rodolfo Montiel and Teodoro Cabrera will it be possible to assist in dismantling the culture of impunity

that exists in Mexico and to make sure that similar cases do not occur in the future" said Amnesty International.

Rodolfo Montiel and Teodoro Cabrera have also said that they intend to carry on with their environmental campaigning with the *Organización Campesina Ecológica de la Sierra de Petatlán y Coyuca de Catalán (Guerrero)*, *Sierra de Petatlán and Coyuca de Catalán (Guerrero)* Peasant Ecologist Organization, the same legitimate work which led to their arbitrary detention and torture by members of the army and their subsequent trial and conviction on the basis of false allegations.

"Despite the many excuses that have been made, the release of Rodolfo Montiel and Teodoro Cabrera shows that, when there is the political will to do so, it is possible to intervene to resolve outstanding human rights issues," Amnesty International said while reminding the Mexican authorities that another prisoner of conscience, General Francisco Gallardo, remains in prison and is today marking the eighth anniversary of his unjust imprisonment.

In his statement yesterday, President Fox acknowledged that one of the reasons for releasing the two ecologists was the ruling on the case made by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. Amnesty International pointed out that the same Working Group had issued a similar ruling in favour of General Gallardo and that there was also a recommendation from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights calling for his immediate release.

"It is time for President Fox to be consistent in complying with the recommendations of these international bodies and to order the immediate release of General Gallardo," Amnesty International insisted.

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