

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 41/048/2005

21 December 2005

Further Information on UA 337/04 (AMR 41/055/2004, 17 December 2004)- Fear for safety

MEXICO Marco Antonio Suástegui Muñoz (m), architect

New names: Communities affected by the construction of the "La Parota" hydroelectric dam in Guerrero State

On 16 December, at least eight people were injured during clashes between police and inhabitants of the town of Dos Arroyos in the municipality of Acapulco, Guerrero State, who are opposing plans to flood a large area of farmland in order to construct a hydroelectric dam. The authorities have reportedly failed to consult local communities fairly and transparently about the plans, leading to an atmosphere of increasing tension and violence in the area. It is feared that the lives of people in these communities may be at risk.

The clashes occurred after the state and federal authorities convened a meeting at short notice in the neighbouring town of Tierra Colorado, at which community representatives voted on the plans to construct the "La Parota" dam. Some 300 police officers reportedly attempted to stop inhabitants of Dos Arroyos opposed to the dam from attending the meeting by blocking the roads leading out of the town. According to reports, those opposing the dam barricaded a bridge in the path of the police in order to stop them entering the town. The community members were reportedly carrying machetes and catapults. When police, also carrying machetes, attempted to cross the barricade, the inhabitants allegedly threw stones at them. The police reportedly responded by throwing stones and using tear gas. At least eight people were injured, including Marco Antonio Suástegui, the leader of the *Consejo de Ejidatarios y Comuneros Opositores a la Parota* (CECOP), a group opposed to the construction of the dam. Four community members were detained as a result of the clashes, and charged with causing harm, damage and resistance to the authorities. They were released on bail the following day.

According to reports, the authorities had provided buses to take those who approve of the dam's construction from Dos Arroyos to the meeting in Tierra Colorado, in order to secure a favourable vote. The meeting lasted for no more than 15 minutes and resulted in a unanimous vote in favour of the construction of the dam. However, according to the CECOP and other human rights organizations, this vote did not represent the views of all the people affected. The CECOP claims that 15 similar meetings with local community representatives from the area which would be affected by the dam have deliberately excluded those opposed to the dam, and that others attending the meetings have been misled, resulting in an unfair process lacking transparency. It is feared that this may increase resentment among communities in the area, and thus the two remaining consultation meetings, scheduled to take place in December, could be flashpoints for further violence.

In September 2005, Tomás Cruz Zamora, who lived in the hamlet of Huamuchitos, was killed by someone from the same community. He had reportedly expressed his opposition to the dam. In November, Cristino Cruz Hernández, who was allegedly in favour of the dam, was also killed. In 2004, Marco Antonio Suástegui was threatened and intimidated after campaigning against the dam.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The CECOP and other human rights organizations claim that the construction of La Parota dam could lead to the flooding of some 140 square kilometres of farmland, affecting 17,000 inhabitants, and threatening the livelihood of 20 farming communities. The project has divided local communities, with some accepting compensation for the destruction of their land, and others strongly opposed.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- calling on the authorities to take measures to ensure the safety of members of the communities affected by the construction of the dam according to their wishes;
- expressing concern at the apparent lack of effective steps carried out by the authorities to prevent the climate of violence from increasing surrounding the construction of the dam, and urging them to ensure the two remaining consultation meetings are conducted peacefully, fairly and transparently;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that all criminal complaints against the four people released on bail are investigated according to the law and adhere to international fair trial standards;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that a genuine consultation is carried out, including all who are affected by the construction of the dam.

APPEALS TO:

State Governor

Lic. Zeferino Torreblanca Galindo
Gobernador Electo del Estado de Guerrero.
Horacio Nelson número 15 Fraccionamiento Costa Azul
C.P. 39850, Acapulco, Guerrero, México

Fax: +52 747 47 14788 (if someone answers, say "Tono de fax por favor")

Salutation: Dear Governor /Señor Gobernador

Minister of the Interior

Lic. Carlos Abascal Carranza
Secretario de Gobernación
Secretaría de Gobernación
Bucareli 99, 1er. piso, Col. Juárez
Delegación Cuauhtémoc, México D.F., C.P.06600, Mexico

Fax: + 52 55 5093 3414 / 093 3415/ 093 3410

Salutation: Señor Secretario / Dear Minister

Director of Federal Commission of Electricity (Comisión Federal de Electricidad)

Lic. Alfredo Elías Ayub
2a. Secc. del Bosque de Chapultepec
Museo Tecnológico, Miguel Hidalgo
Distrito Federal, CP 11870, México

Fax: +52 55 55 33 53 21

Salutation: Estimado Director de la CFE/ Dear Director

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Organization

Centro de Derechos Humanos "Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez" A.C., (PRODH)
Serapio Rendon 57-B, Col. San Rafael, 06470, México D.F. Mexico

Human Rights Organization

Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña "Tlachinollan" AC.,
Calle Mina número 77, Colonia Centro, Tlapa de Comonfort, CP. 41304, Guerrero, México

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 1 February 2006.