

PUBLIC

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29 November 2006

UA 323/06      Fear for safety/ Threats/ Arbitrary arrests

**MEXICO**      **Father Carlos Franco Pérez Méndez (m), Catholic priest**  
**Alberto Tacume Cilia Ocampo (m), human rights defender with the organization**  
**Yaxkin Human Rights Centre (*Centro de Derechos Humanos Yaxkin*)**  
**Members of the organization Services for an Alternative Education (*Servicios para una Educación Alternativa*, EDUCA)**  
**Other human rights defenders working in Oaxaca**

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Amnesty International is concerned at intimidation of individuals and organizations working to protect human rights in the state of Oaxaca. Supporters of the state government appear to be responsible for the intimidation. The lives of those named above, and of other human rights defenders in Oaxaca, may be at risk.

On the evening of 26 November, three unidentified individuals shot several times in the air as they drove past the Catholic church of Siete Príncipes in Oaxaca city, where Father Carlos Franco Pérez Méndez works. Shortly afterwards, Father Carlos Franco Pérez Méndez arrived in his van and parked it in front of the church. While he was in his office inside the church, the same individuals returned, shot at the van several times and left. Father Carlos Franco Pérez Méndez may have been targeted because of the first aid he offered to people who were injured during the recent clashes between protesters and security forces in the city of Oaxaca. In the days before the incident, Father Carlos Franco Pérez Méndez had been denounced by presenters on the pro-government pirate radio station *Radio Ciudadana*, which is transmitting from an unknown location. According to reports, presenters on this radio station have been inciting violence against the organisers of the Oaxaca protests, as well as against various public figures, representatives of the church and social organizations who are perceived as sympathetic to the opposition movement, the Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca (*Asamblea Popular del Pueblo de Oaxaca*, APPO).

On 27 November, presenters on *Radio Ciudadana* reportedly claimed that the office of the human rights and community development organization Services for an Alternative Education (*Servicios para una Educación Alternativa*, EDUCA) was being used to manufacture Molotov cocktail explosive devices. The radio presenters reportedly incited the public to attack and set fire to the offices of EDUCA. As a result, the safety of staff working for EDUCA is at risk.

According to reports, on the same day, Alberto Tacume Cilia Ocampo, of the Mexico City-based indigenous rights organization, Yaxkin Human Rights Centre (*Centro de Derechos Humanos Yaxkin*), was documenting human rights violations perpetrated during the clashes that happened last weekend around Oaxaca's university campus. He was reportedly accompanied by two other people whose identities have not been confirmed. All three were reportedly arrested by state police and are detained in the Santa María Ixcatel prison. They have not been allowed access to their families and legal representation of their choice. Amnesty International is concerned that they may have been arbitrarily detained while carrying out their legitimate human rights work.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In May 2006 teachers initiated a strike in Oaxaca state calling for improved pay and conditions, and occupied the main square and surrounding streets. An attempt by state police to forcibly evict teachers on 14 June led to a radicalization of the protest and the formation of the APPO, an umbrella organization of social and political groups in support of the teachers and united in calling for the resignation of the state governor. As the climate of violence in the city increased, armed police in plain clothes started to arbitrarily detain protesters and were reportedly responsible for several shootings. Protesters established barricades in many

neighbourhoods in late August and the security situation further declined as unidentified armed men continued to target opposition supporters in marches and on barricades. On 29 October, the PFP entered the city to restore order. There have been repeated violent clashes between police and opposition demonstrators, with some protesters using Molotov cocktails, stones, fireworks and police using teargas, water cannons, batons and firearms.

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

- expressing concern at the intimidation of individuals and organizations working to protect human rights in the state of Oaxaca;
- urging the authorities to investigate the attack and intimidation suffered by Catholic priest Father Carlos Franco Pérez Méndez on 25 November and to take immediate measures to ensure his safety;
- calling on the authorities to investigate the incitement to violence by presenters of *Radio Ciudadana* against individuals and organizations working for the protection of human rights violations and calling for effective measures to end radio broadcasts which incite violence and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee the safety of those working with EDUCA who have been specifically identified for attack by *Radio Ciudadana*;
- calling for the authorities to grant Alberto Tacume Cilia Ocampo and two other individuals accompanying him immediate access to relatives, medical assistance, a lawyer of their choice and to ensure their right to a fair trial;
- reminding the authorities that the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties recognizes the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders and their right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals.

**APPEALS TO:**

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**

**Salutation: Dear Minister/ Estimado Secretario de Gobernación**

Minister of Public Security

Lic. Eduardo Medina Mora

Secretario de Seguridad Pública, Secretaría de Seguridad Pública

Paseo de la Reforma No.364, piso 16

Colonia Juarez, Delegación Cuauhtémoc, México DF. C.P. 06600, MEXICO

**Fax: + 52 55 5241 8393**

**Salutation: Señor Secretario / Dear Minister**

Governor of Oaxaca

Ulises Ruiz Ortiz

Gobernador del Estado de Oaxaca, Carretera Oaxaca - Puerto Angel, Km. 9.5

Santa María Coyotopec, C. P. 71254, Oaxaca, Oaxaca, MEXICO

**Fax: + 52 951 511 6879 (if someone answers, say "me da tono de fax, por favor")**

**Salutation: Señor Gobernador/Dear Governor**

President of the National Human Rights Commission

Dr. José Luis Soberanes Fernández

Presidente de la Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDH)

Periférico Sur 3469, 5º piso, Col. San Jerónimo Lídice, México D.F. 10200, MÉXICO

**Fax: + 52 55 5681 7199**

**Salutation: Dear President / Estimado Presidente**

**COPIES TO:**

President of the Oaxaca State Human Rights Commission

Dr. Jaime Pérez Jiménez

Presidente de la Comisión Estatal

Calle de los Derechos Humanos no. 210, Colonia América, C.P. 68050, Oaxaca, Oaxaca, México.

**Fax: + 52 951 503 0220**

**Salutation: Dear President / Estimado Presidente**

Human rights organization in Oaxaca

Red Oaxaqueña de Derechos Humanos

Calle Crespo 524 Interior 4-E, Col. Centro, Oaxaca, Oaxaca, CP. 68000, MEXICO

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 January 2007.