

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 41/61/97

UA 230/97

"Disappearance"/ Torture

23 July 1997

MEXICO Benito Bahena Maldonado, peasant activist

Benito Bahena Maldonado and Domingo Ayala "disappeared" on 24 June 1997 after they were detained by a group of armed men in the port of Acapulco. Benito Bahena Maldonado is an active member of the *Organización Campesina de la Sierra del Sur (OCSS)*, Southern Sierra Peasant Organisation, a peasant organization in Guerrero State. Domingo Ayala was released seven days later but Benito Bahena Maldonado has not been seen since.

Domingo Ayala reported that he and Benito Bahena Maldonado had been taken to a secret detention centre and then transferred to military barracks in Guerrero and Mexico City. Both men were tortured which included beating, near suffocation with plastic bags and electric shocks.

Domingo Ayala last saw Benito Bahena Maldonado in secret detention in military barracks in Mexico City. He remains "disappeared" and Amnesty International is gravely concerned for his safety. Those responsible for the abduction and torture of both men remain unpunished.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A wave of human rights violations has swept through Guerrero state since the massacre of 17 peasants on 28 June 1995 in the village of Aguas Blancas in an ambush staged by the state police and government officials (see UA 159/95, AMR 41/15/95, 5 July 1995, and follow-ups AMR 41/16/95, 26 July 1995, and AMR 41/18/95, 17 August 1995).

The *Ejército Popular Revolucionario (EPR)*, People's Revolutionary Army, an armed opposition group, made its first public appearance in the region on 28 June 1996, the anniversary of the Aguas Blancas massacre, and has since carried out several attacks against the Mexican security forces deployed in the region. Since then the security forces have consistently targeted peasants and their leaders as well as community activists and human rights defenders for intimidation, arrest, ill-treatment and torture in the context of counter-insurgency operations.

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

- calling for the whereabouts of Benito Bahena Maldonado to be made public immediately and for his family to be informed of his physical condition;
- seeking assurances that if he is in detention he is being treated humanely;
- calling for an immediate and thorough investigation into the abduction and torture of Benito Bahena Maldonado and Domingo Ayala;
- expressing deep alarm at the increasing number of reports of human rights violations in the state of Guerrero, the apparent lack of effective action to stop them and the impunity currently enjoyed by most perpetrators.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Defence

Gral. Enrique Cervantes Aguirre
Secretario de la Defensa Nacional
Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional
Blvd. Manuel Ávila Camacho y

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11640 México D.F.
MEXICO

Telegrams: Sr. Secretario, México D.F., MEXICO

Fax: (+52 5) 557 8963

Salutations: Sr. Secretario/ Dear Minister

2) Attorney General of the State of Guerrero

Lic. Antonio Hernández Díaz
Procurador del Estado de Guerrero
Carretera Nacional México-Acapulco Km. 6.300
CP 39.000, Chilpancingo, Guerrero, MEXICO.

Telegrams: Sr. Procurador, Guerrero, México

Faxes: + 52 747 223 28 (if voice ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Sr. Procurador/ Dear State Attorney

3) Interim Governor of the State of Guerrero

Angel Heladio Aguirre Rivero
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Palacio de Gobierno
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Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor

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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 3 September 1997.