

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 41/62/97

UA 235/97 Fear for torture/ill-treatment/arbitrary arrests/
Legal concern

25 July 1997

MEXICO Enriqueta Ruiz(f), human rights and union activist

Joel Alberto García González, lawyer, human rights and union
activist

74 workers and union activists

On 21 July 1997, 74 workers were arbitrarily and violently arrested by riot police in Villahermosa, Tabasco state, during a peaceful strike to demand improved labour conditions. The workers, who were exercising their constitutional right to peaceful union activism, are activist members of the recently formed *Coalición de Trabajadores Burócratas*, Coalition of Administrative Workers, an organization created as an alternative to the official government union. They were held incommunicado for 36 hours and were denied access to lawyers, relatives and medical care.

On 21 July Enriqueta Ruiz and Joel Alberto García González were arbitrarily detained in the office of the *Procuraduría General*, (PGE), Attorney General's Office of Tabasco state while requesting a visit to the 74 detained workers.

Eye-witness reports state that they were subject to ill-treatment and that Joel Alberto was repeatedly hit with a rifle-butt and dragged down the stairs of the premises by PGE officials.

Amnesty International believes that all 76 detainees are prisoners of conscience who therefore should be released immediately and unconditionally.

Amnesty International has often documented torture and ill-treatment by Tabasco state riot police and therefore fears that those detained are at risk of torture or ill-treatment. Members of the *Comité de Derechos Humanos de Tabasco*, (CODEHUTAB), Human Rights Committee of Tabasco, who have been able to visit the workers lately, have confirmed that the conditions in the detention centre are appalling to the extent that they amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Enriqueta Ruiz and Joel Alberto García González are well-known human rights activists in Mexico, with a particular focus on workers' rights. Joel Alberto has received threats in the past, forcing him to flee Tabasco state in 1993 for almost a year in fear for his safety.

Amnesty International has recorded a long-term pattern of harassment by security forces and threats targeted at government critics and professional groups such as journalists, lawyers and union leaders. Since 1996, the level of harassment against human rights defenders has increased significantly.

The Mexican government, despite continually pledging to protect human rights defenders, has consistently failed to take effective action to ensure a safe environment for professionals and activists. The organization is concerned at the impunity enjoyed by the majority of those responsible.

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

- calling for prompt, thorough and impartial investigations into allegations of the use of arbitrary arrest and the use of excessive force and ill-treatment

(citing the cases of Joel Alberto García González, Enriqueta Ruiz and 74 others) by members of the riot police on 21 July in Villahermosa, state of Tabasco;
 - asking that those responsible be brought to justice;
 - calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all those still detained and asking for those responsible to be brought to justice;
 - requesting politely information about the implementation of your recommendations;

APPEALS TO:

1) Minister of the Interior
 Lic. Emilio Chuayffet Chemor
 Secretario de la Gobernación
 Secretaría de la Gobernación
 Bucareli 99, 1er piso
 Col. Juárez
 06699, México DF, MEXICO
Telegrams: Secretario Gobernación, México D.F., México
Faxes: + 52 5 546 5350
Salutation: Sr. Secretario/Dear Minister

2) Governor of Tabasco State
 Roberto Madrazo Pintado
 Gobernador del Estado de Tabasco
 Palacio de Gobierno
 Villahermosa, Tabasco, MEXICO
Telegrams: Gobernador, Tabasco, México
Faxes: + 52 93 14 3003
Salutation: Sr. Gobernador/Dear Governor

3) Procurador of Tabasco State
 Patricia Febrero Iruarte
 Procuradora del Estado de Tabasco
 Procuraduría General de Justicia
 Paseo Usumacinta s/n, esquina Ayuntamiento
 Villahermosa, Tabasco, MEXICO
Telegrams: Procuradora, Tabasco, México
Faxes: + 52 93 15 5221
Salutation: Sr. Procurador/Dear Attorney

When sending faxes please request the following if asked: "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor"

COPIES TO:

1) Weekly magazine
 Sr. Editor
 La Jornada, Balderas 68,
 06050, México D.F., MEXICO
Fax: + 52 5 5212763/52 5 5101901

2) Human rights organization
 Sres. Comité de Derechos Humanos de Tabasco
 A. Sánchez Magallanes 844 Altos
 86000 Villahermosa, Tabasco, MEXICO

Fax: +52 93 12 8362
e-mail:codehutab@laneta.apc.org

3)International Labour Office
4 Route des Morillos
CH-1211 Geneve 22
Switzerland
Fax:+41 22 799 6260

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 5 September 1997.