

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 41/69/97

This is a limited action. Please restrict appeals to 15 per Section.

UA 259/97 Torture / Fear of torture / Prisoner of conscience 6 August 1997

MEXICO Julio Atenco Vidal, human rights defender

Human rights defender Julio Atenco Vidal is alleged to have been tortured while in secret detention and is feared to remain at risk of torture in police custody.

Julio Atenco Vidal "disappeared" for 24 hours after being arbitrarily detained by five agents of the state judicial police in Ciudad Mendoza, Veracruz State, on 4 August 1997. He reappeared the following day, 5 August, in a police station in Orizaba in the same state, after allegedly being subjected to torture and ill-treatment.

He has been accused of five crimes: theft, damages and insults towards the authorities, kidnapping and inflicting bodily harm (*robo, daños y ultraje a las autoridades, lesiones y secuestro*). According to reports there is no evidence to support the charges, and Amnesty International believes that he has been targeted solely for his human rights activism.

Julio Atenco Vidal, who is highly regarded for his work in defence of the rights of indigenous people, has recently been campaigning against the frequent infringements on civil liberties committed by the police during operations carried out in the indigenous communities of Zongolica and Tequila, Veracruz State.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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 still not made this purported commitment a reality. Amnesty International remains seriously concerned at the level of impunity enjoyed by the majority of those responsible for committing human rights violations.

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

- calling for immediate and unconditional release of Julio Atenco Vidal, and urging immediate and effective steps to guarantee his safety while in detention;
- calling for a full and prompt investigation into his arbitrary detention, "disappearance" and alleged torture and ill-treatment, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- expressing deep alarm at the continuing pattern of harassment and intimidation towards human rights defenders by the Mexican security forces.

APPEALS TO:

Governor of the State of Veracruz
Lic. Patricio Chirinos Calero
Gobernador del Estado de
Veracruz
Palacio de Gobierno

2

Jalapa
Estado de Veracruz
MEXICO

Telegrams: Gobernador Chirinos Calero, Jalapa, Veracruz, Mexico

Faxes: +52 281 82167

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador/ Dear Governor

COPIES TO:

Human rights organization
Centro de Derechos Humanos
"Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez" A.C.
Puebla N. 153 Col. Roma,
06700 México D.F. 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 18 September 1997.