

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 41/103/97

UA 351/97

Fear for safety

6 November 1997

MEXICO Father Samuel Ruiz, Bishop of San Cristóbal de las Casas

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Raúl Vera, auxiliary bishop  
And some 60 Indian worshippers

On 5 November 1997, a group of Indian worshippers, headed by Bishop Samuel Ruiz, was attacked by gunmen, allegedly members of a paramilitary group. Three people are reported to have been injured. The attack has particularly renewed Amnesty International's concern for the safety of Bishop Ruiz, who has been subjected to threats and attacks previously because of his work for human rights and peace in Chiapas state.

The attack reportedly occurred on the evening of 5 November in the town of Tila in Chiapas as Bishop Ruiz and another bishop, Raúl Vera, were leading 60 Indian worshippers back from a religious gathering. Hidden gunmen ambushed the convoy and fired machine guns into the convoy. Church officials in Mexico allege that the attack was carried out by a paramilitary group known as *Paz y Justicia*, Peace and Justice, who had previously attempted to block Bishop Ruiz's visit to Tila.

In mid-1996, an Urgent Action was issued on behalf of human rights defenders, including Bishops Ruiz and Vera, following earlier threats (see UA 201/96, AMR 41/44/96, 14 August).

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has recorded a long-term pattern of threats, intimidation and violent repression against human rights workers active in promoting and protecting the rights of the poorest sectors of the population. The failure to bring to justice those responsible for human rights violations and the lack of effective action to stop them and to end such impunity has apparently helped to fuel an increasing number of threats and attacks against human rights defenders and peasant activists.

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

- condemning the attack against the religious convoy headed by Father Samuel Ruiz and Raúl Vera on 5 November 1997;
- seeking assurances that those injured in the attack will be given all necessary medical attention;
- calling for an immediate and thorough investigation into the attack, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- calling for urgent and appropriate measures to ensure the safety of Father Samuel Ruiz and the others attacked, and any other witnesses to the attack.

#### APPEALS TO:

1) Governor of the State of Chiapas  
Lic. Julio César Ruiz Ferro  
Gobernador del Estado de Chiapas  
Palacio de Gobierno  
Av. Central y Primera Oriente  
Colonia Centro, 29009 Tuxtla Gutiérrez

Estado de Chiapas, MEXICO

**Telegrams: Gobernador Ruiz Ferro, Chiapas, México**

**Faxes: +52 961 20917 (if voice, ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")**

**Salutation: Sr. Gobernador/Dear Governor**

2) Attorney General, Chiapas

Marco Antonio Besares Escobar

Procurador General de Chiapas

Procuraduría General

Tuxtla Gutiérrez

Estado de Chiapas, MEXICO

**Telegrams: Procurador General de Chiapas, Tuxtla Gutierrez, Mexico**

**Faxes: + 52 9 616 5376 (if voice, ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")**

**Salutation: Sr Procurador / Dear Attorney General**

**COPIES TO:**

Human Rights Organization

Comisión de Derechos Humanos "Fray Bartolomé de las Casas"

Apartado postal 178

San Cristóbal de las Casas

29250 Chiapas

**Faxes: +52 967 835 51**

**E-mail: cdh-bcasas@laneta.org.apc**

**Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano**

Prolongación Ministerios 24-B

Col Tepeyac-Insurgentes

Apdo 118-005

07020 México DF

Mexico

**Faxes: + 52 5 563 3968**

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 25 December 1997.