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# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 38/95

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TO: PRESS OFFICERS  
FROM: IS PRESS OFFICE  
DATE: 22 FEBRUARY 1995

AI INDEX: NWS 11/38/95  
DISTR: SC/PO  
NO OF WORDS: 659

NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - MEXICO (reactive item being sent to international media)

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Iraqi Kurdistan (Northern Iraq) - 28 February - SEE NEWS SERVICE 266 & 35/95  
Campaign on Women - 7 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 12/95, 34/95 & 37/95

Brazil - 27 March - SEE NEWS SERVICE 29/95

RWANDA - 6 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95

SYRIA - 11 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 32/95

## TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

CAMBODIA - 14 MARCH - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95

## EVENTS AND MISSIONS

NB: The details below are for your information only, and there may or may not be media work involved. Can you please not publicize anything until further notice from the IS.

MISSION TO KENYA 16 March - 2 April - SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95

MISSION TO BURUNDI 27 February - 14 March- SEE NEWS SERVICE 37/95

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MEXICO: LATEST STATEMENT FROM THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT INDICATES UNWILLINGNESS TO FULLY ACKNOWLEDGE NEW HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

The Mexican government's criticism of Amnesty International's latest reports on human rights violations in Mexico shows that the government is unwilling to fully acknowledge and resolve the serious human rights problem in the country.

On 20 February the Mexican Embassy in London issued a statement, saying that the Mexican government "categorically rejects" what it defines as "irresponsible and non-professional reports" from Amnesty International.

"The reaction this week shows the government is still not facing up to the human rights problem in Mexico," the organization said.

Amnesty International believes that the statement was issued before completion of any official investigation into scores of complaints of human rights violations by government officials in the wake of the latest clamp-down against the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) in the southern state of Chiapas, and elsewhere in Mexico.

During the latest army and police operations against the EZLN Amnesty International has documented scores of cases of arbitrary arrests, dozens of cases of torture and some "disappearances" of people, in Chiapas and elsewhere in Mexico.

The organization has also received dozens of reports of harassment, intimidation, threats and even attacks against human rights monitors, and civil and political activists in Chiapas. Some, like Amado Avendaño Figueroa, have faced unfounded criminal accusations from official bodies. On 7 February the Secretaría de Defensa Nacional (SEDENA), or Ministry of Defense, issued a statement falsely accusing Mr. Avendaño -- a civil-rights campaigner, journalist, political activist, and runner-up in recent state governorship elections in Chiapas -- of attacking and injuring a soldier even though Mr. Avendaño was proven to be somewhere else.

Others, like Bishop Samuel Ruiz from San Cristóbal de las Casas, a renowned human rights activist, have come under new attacks and death threats. In addition, several members of Indian peasant organizations in Chiapas have suffered arrest, ill-treatment and torture.

These new reports are consistent with the long-term pattern of impunity for human rights violations in Mexico which Amnesty International has reported. It is therefore reiterating its appeals to the Mexican authorities to fully implement the organization's recommendations -- included in a memorandum sent

to President Ernesto Zedillo towards the end of 1994 -- to put an immediate and effective end to impunity and the practice of torture.

The organization believes that those responsible for the cases illustrated in the memorandum, including extra-judicial executions by the army in Chiapas in January 1994, have not been brought to justice.

Indeed, in its December 1994 report on Mexico, the United Nation's Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions expressed concern about "persistent reports of violations of the right to life in the country, particularly in connection with excessive and arbitrary use of force by law enforcement officials during military operations or directed against persons in detention".

Amnesty International will continue investigating the latest reports about killings of Indian peasants in Chiapas, including that of Hipólito Hernández Velásquez, member of Indígenas de la Sierra Madre de Motozintla (ISMAM), an Indian rights' organization murdered in Tapachula by two unidentified men on 11 February and urges the Mexican government to do the same.

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