

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Further information on UA 25/94 (AMR 41/01/94, 26 January 1994) - Fear of "disappearance" / Torture / Fear for safety and new concern: Harassment of human rights activists

MEXICO: Severiano SANTIZ GÓMEZ, 65
Sebastián SANTIZ LÓPEZ, 65
Hermelindo SANTIZ GÓMEZ, 40

and other members of the Tzeltal indigenous community of Morelia, state of Chiapas

Amnesty International has learned that the bodies of the people named above were found near the Tzeltal indigenous community of Morelia, state of Chiapas, on 11 February 1994. The remains were positively identified as belonging to Severiano Santiz Gómez, Sebastián Santiz López and Hermelindo Santiz Gómez on the basis on dental traits and belongings found with the bodies. The three were arbitrarily arrested by members of the army on 7 January 1994 (not 6 January 1994 as previously stated) and reportedly brutally tortured before being taken away in a military ambulance. They were never seen alive again. These killings heighten Amnesty International's fears for the lives of at least 9 other people who have reportedly "disappeared" since the beginning of January (see also UA 28/94, AMR 41/02/94, 27 January 1994).

In a letter to Amnesty International dated on 9 February, the Mexican government acknowledged Hermelindo Santiz Gómez' detention, but stated that he had been released after the intervention of the governmental *Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos*, National Human Rights Commission.

Contradicting the above, on 13 February the Ministry of National Defense issued a bulletin denying that Severiano Santiz Gómez, Sebastián Santiz López and Hermelindo Santiz Gómez had ever been detained by members of the armed forces as sustained by dozens of witnesses. Amnesty International delegates who visited Chiapas between 18 and 21 January 1994 interviewed at least 25 people from the village of Morelia who claimed to have witnessed members of the army taking away the three men in a military ambulance.

Amnesty International is also concerned about recent reports indicating that members of the armed forces have been harassing grassroots activists and human rights monitors in the region to force them to drop claims that the army has been involved in human rights violations. Amnesty International continues to fear for the physical safety of witnesses to these abuses and of human rights monitors working in the area.

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

- expressing serious concern at the killings of Severiano Santiz Gómez, Sebastián Santiz López and Hermelindo Santiz Gómez, following their arrest and reported torture by members of the Mexican army;
- requesting that an immediate and impartial investigation be carried out into these killings and that those found responsible be brought to justice;
- expressing concern for the lives of at least nine others who have "disappeared" in Chiapas since the beginning of the armed conflict on 1 January 1994 and

requesting that there be an immediate and thorough investigation into the whereabouts of all reported "disappeared" persons;
 - urging that any "disappeared" persons who are in detention be humanely treated and allowed access to lawyers and relatives;
 - urging that if they are in detention, that they be charged with a recognizable offense or released immediately.
 - urging the authorities to safeguard the physical safety of human rights monitors working in the area.

APPEALS TO:

1) President of the Republic

Lic. Carlos Salinas de Gortari
 Presidente de la República
 Palacio Nacional
 06067 México D.F., Mexico

Telegrams: Presidente Salinas, México D.F., Mexico

Telexes: 170937 sppnme; 1774468 sppnme

Faxes: +52 5 271 1764

Salutation: Sr. Presidente/Dear President

2) Minister of Defense

Gral. Antonio Riviello Bazán
 Secretario de Defensa Nacional
 Secretaría de Defensa Nacional
 Ávila Camacho e Industria Militar
 Lomas de Sotelo
 11640 México DF, Mexico

Telegramas: Ministro Defensa, Mexico DF, Mexico

Faxes: +52 5 557 7904

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

1) National Human Rights Commission

Sres.
 Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos
 Periférico Sur 3469
 Col San Jerónimo Lídice
 10200 México DF, Mexico

2) Non-governmental Human Rights Organization

Sres.
 CONPAZ - Coordinación de los ONGs
 de San Cristóbal de las Casas por la Paz
 Avda. 5 de Mayo No. 21
 Barrio La Merced
 San Cristóbal de las Casas
 Chiapas, Mexico

3) daily newspaper

Sr. Editor
 Reforma
 Reforma 295, 9° piso
 06170 Mexico DF, 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 29 March 1994.