

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 41/03/97

UA 30/97

Fear of torture/ill-treatment

28 January 1997

MEXICO Benigno GUZMÁN MARTÍNEZ, peasant activist

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Benigno Guzmán Martínez, a peasant activist in the state of Guerrero, was detained by members of the *Procuraduría General de Justicia del Distrito Federal*, Federal District Attorney General's Office, on 27 January 1997 in southern Mexico City. Amnesty International fears that he may face torture or ill-treatment in detention.

Benigno Guzmán, a leader of the *Organización Campesina de la Sierra del Sur*, OCSS, Southern Sierra Peasant Organization, in Guerrero, is accused of being a senior leader of the *Ejército Popular Revolucionario*, EPR, Revolutionary Popular Army, an armed opposition group. He has reportedly been taken to Chilpancingo, capital of Guerrero, where he faces a number of unspecified charges.

According to a member of the UOSS, an umbrella peasant organization in the state of Guerrero, on 26 January two unidentified men entered the offices of the OCSS in Acapulco and threatened the secretary with death to force her to give them information about several members of the OCSS.

A communique released by the *Secretaría de Gobernación*, Interior Ministry, on 27 January, states that Benigno Guzmán's detention was made possible by the testimonies of alleged members of the EPR who are in detention. Several of these, who were detained in mid-1996, were reportedly tortured by the security forces to extract confessions (see EXTRA 103/96, AMR 41/34/96, 5 July 1996; follow-ups AMR 41/37/96, 18 July 1996; AMR 41/50/96, 29 August 1996; and AMR 41/69/96, 4 November 1996).

Confessions extracted under duress continue to be accepted by Mexican Courts as evidence against detainees and are often form the only basis for conviction and sentencing.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

OCSS members have previously suffered attacks and death threats in connection with their activities on behalf of the local indigenous and peasant populations.

Since the massacre of 17 peasants on 28 June 1995 in Aguas Blancas in an ambush staged by Guerrero state police and government officials (see UA 159/95, AMR 41/15/95, 5 July 1995, and follow-ups AMR 41/16/95, 26 July 1995 and AMR 41/18/95, 17 August 1995), a wave of violence has swept through the state. Many of those killed were OCSS members. The climate of violence has intensified since 28 June 1996, when relatives and OCSS members held a memorial service on the anniversary of the massacre, at which the (previously unknown) EPR made an appearance.

Although the EPR and the OCSS have made public statements denying any links between them, the government has launched a campaign against members of the OCSS for allegedly belonging to the EPR (see NWS 118/96, AMR 41/31/96, 28 June 1996). On 28 June 1996, the Governor of Guerrero issued arrest warrants against several members of the OCSS, including Benigno Guzmán Martínez.

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

- calling on the authorities to ensure that the physical integrity of Benigno Guzmán Martínez is preserved while in detention;
- urging an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into claims that other alleged members of the EPR have been tortured in detention to obtain confessions;
- requesting that Benigno Guzmán be charged with a recognizable criminal offence or immediately released;
- calling for immediate measures to be put in place to ensure the safety of all members of the OCSS and other peasant organizations working in the state of Guerrero.

**APPEALS TO:**1) President of the Republic

Lic. Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León

Presidente de la República

Palacio Nacional, 06067 México D.F., MEXICO

**Telegrams: Presidente Zedillo, México D.F., México****Telexes: 170937 sppnme; 1774468 sppnme****Faxes: (+ 52 5) 271 1764 / 515 1794 / 542 1648 (voice line: ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")****Salutation: Sr. Presidente / Dear President**2) 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**3) Attorney General of the Republic

Lic. Jorge Madrazo Cuéllar

Procurador General de la República

Procuraduría General de la República

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**Telegrams: Procurador Madrazo, México D.F., México****Faxes: (+52 5) 626 4419****Salutation: Sr. Procurador General / Dear Attorney General****COPIES TO:**1) Peasant organization

Sres.

Unión de Organizaciones

de la Sierra Sur (UOSS)

Calle Zapata No. 17

Col. Fraccionamiento 20 de Noviembre

Chilpancingo, Guerrero, MEXICO

2) Newspaper

Sr. Editor

La Jornada  
Balderas 68  
06050 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 20 March 1997.