

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 09/06 (AMR 41/004/2006, 10 January 2006) Fear for safety/ legal concern/ possible prisoner of conscience

MEXICO **Martín Barrios Hernández (m), human rights defender, president of the Human and Labour Rights Commission of Tehuacán Valley (*Comisión de Derechos Humanos y Laborales del Valle de Tehuacán*)**

On 12 January human rights defender Martín Barrios Hernández was released from prison in the city of Puebla, southern Mexico, after being pardoned by the local textile plant owner who had accused him. However, Amnesty International believes that Martín Barrios Hernández may face reprisals, as he is determined to continue helping local employees campaign for greater rights. He remains in danger.

Martín Barrios Hernández, the president of the Human and Labour Rights Commission of Tehuacán Valley (*Comisión de Derechos Humanos y Laborales del Valle de Tehuacán*), was detained on 29 December on charges of blackmail, which Amnesty International believes may have been fabricated in order to deter him from carrying out his human rights work. His release came about after intense national and international pressure. After being freed, Martín Barrios Hernández stated that he had never asked the textile plant owner for a pardon because he is innocent of the charges brought against him. He also thanked Amnesty International for its ongoing work on his case.

On 30 December, the day after the arrest of Martín Barrios Hernández, a group of owners of local *maquilas* (assembly plants) in the Tehuacán valley in Puebla State paid for an open letter to be published in local newspapers in which they thanked the State authorities for detaining and prosecuting Martín Barrios Hernández. The letter also accused Martín Barrios Hernández of blackmail and stated that he was responsible for organizing protests and strikes that discourage foreign investment.

While in custody, Martín Barrios Hernández had defied the state authorities' attempts to coerce him into curtailing his human rights work in exchange for his release. According to reports, he was subsequently intimidated by prison guards who entered his cell during the night. Amnesty International fears that he and other members of the Commission are at increased risk of attack, harassment and intimidation following his release.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- calling on the authorities to take steps to guarantee the safety of Martín Barrios Hernández and other members of the Human and Labour Rights Commission of Tehuacán Valley, according to their wishes, following his release on 12 January;
- calling on the authorities to carry out an independent and impartial investigation into his prosecution and the alleged fabrication of charges against him, and for the results to be made public;
- reminding the authorities that the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms recognizes the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, and their right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals.

APPEALS TO:

State Governor of Puebla

Lic. Martio Marin Torres

Gobernador del Estado de Puebla
14 Oriente, No. 1006, Colonia El Alto, Puebla, México
Fax: +52 222 213 8805
E-mail: gobernador@puebla.gob.mx
Salutation: Dear Governor/ Estimado Gobernador

Attorney General of Puebla
Maestra Blanca Laura Villeda Martínez
Procuradora General de Justicia del Estado de Puebla
Boulevard 5 de mayo y 31 Oriente, Colonia Ladrillera de Benitez, Puebla, Puebla, CP 72539, Mexico
Fax: + 52 222 240 8105
E-mail: c.procurador.pgj@puebla.gob.mx
Salutation: Dear Attorney General/Estimada Procuradora

Director of Human Rights – Interior Ministry
Dr. Ricardo Sepúlveda
Secretaría de Gobernación
Reforma 99, PISO 21, PH, Colonia Tabacalera, C.P. 06030, México D.F. México
Fax: + 52 55 51 28 02 34 (if someone answers say: "tono de fax, por favor")
Salutation: Dear Sir/Estimado Doctor

COPIES TO:

Human rights organization
Comisión de Derechos Humanos y Laborales del Valle de Tehuacán
Boulevard Heroe de Nacozary 210, Colonia Zaragoza, Tehuacan, C.P. 75770 Puebla, Mexico

Human rights organization
Centro de Derechos Humanos "Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez" A.C., (PRODH)
Serapio Rendon 57-B, Col. San Rafael, 06470, 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 24 February 2006.