

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 41/005/2008

22 February 2008

UA 49/08

Fear for safety

MEXICO

Members of the Me Phaa Indigenous People's Organization, including:

Inés Fernández Ortega (f)

Fortunato Prisciliano Sierra (m)

Obtilia Eugenio Manuel (f)

Killed:

Lorenzo Fernández Ortega (m)

Lorenzo Fernández Ortega, a leading member of the Me Phaa Indigenous People's Organization (*Organización del Pueblo Indígena Me Phaa* - OPIM) and brother of Inés Fernández Ortega, was kidnapped on 9 February and found dead the following day, in Ayutla de los Libres, Guerrero State. Other members of OPIM have also suffered threats and intimidation since the day of the kidnapping. Amnesty International is gravely concerned for their safety.

Since mid-January Lorenzo Fernández had been working in the municipality of Ayutla, two and a half hours away from his home in El Camalote community. Due to the distance, he was staying at his employer's warehouse in Ayutla, together with other colleagues. Lorenzo Fernandez was last seen in Ayutla by his colleagues on the afternoon of 9 February as he did not return to sleep in the warehouse that night. His body was found in Ayutla's river on the morning of 10 February and was collected by the Local Prosecutor's Office. There were signs that he had been tortured.

Prior to Lorenzo Fernandez disappearance, a colleague of his reported that three armed men came near the warehouse on 6 February. They had a list of names and asked him if he knew Lorenzo Fernández. When Lorenzo Fernandez's colleague answered that he did not know him, the men left. In addition, in mid January, Lorenzo Fernández had told his sister Inés Fernández Ortega and her husband Fortunato Prisciliano Sierra that he was afraid for his own safety and that of other members of OPIM as unknown men had approached him asking questions about the organisation and their work. He reiterated his concerns with another member of OPIM, Obtilia Eugenio Manuel on 6 February.

As a member of OPIM, Lorenzo Fernández had campaigned and supported the 14 Me Phaa indigenous men who allege they were forcibly sterilized in 1998, and in the case of his sister Inés Fernández Ortega, a Me Phaa indigenous woman who was raped by military soldiers in 2002.

Obtilia Eugenia Manuel, another leading member of OPIM, who has been target of threats since 2004 and is recipient of protection measures by the Inter- American Commission for Human Rights, received a threatening phone call on 9 February. A female voice said "I know you are Obtilia, you'd better calm down your people and you'd better do it because I've got people watching you" (*Sé que tu eres Obtilia, es mejor que calmes ya a tu gente, más vale que lo hagas porque ya está allá mi gente vigilandote*).

Since the death of her brother, Inés Fernández Ortega and her husband Fortunato Prisciliano Sierra have also received several silent phone calls.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

OPIM members have campaigned for justice in a series of human rights violations, including the rape by militaries of Inés Fernández Ortega and Valentina Rosendo Cantú, and the sterilisation of 14 indigenous men in 1998. Amnesty International has documented the attacks and threats that have been suffered by

some of its members, including Inés Fernandez and Fortunato Prisciliano (UA 33/03, AMR 41/004/2003, 3 February 2003, and UA 209/07, AMR 41/050/2007, 14 August 2007) and Obtilia Eugenio Manuel (UA 07/05 AMR 41/001/2005, 12 January 2005). For more information see AI's report, *Mexico: Indigenous Women and Military Injustice* (AMR 41/033/2004, November 2004).

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

- expressing concern at the torture and killing of OPIM activist Lorenzo Fernández Ortega in Ayutla de los Libre between 9 and 10 February 2008;
- calling for a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the killing and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- expressing concern for the safety of OPIM members Inés Fernández, Fortunato Prisciliano and Obtilia Eugenio Manuel;
- calling for a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the threats suffered by them;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that Fortunato Prisciliano, his wife Inés Fernández, and Obtilia Eugenio Manuel receive adequate protection measures to guarantee their safety in accordance with their wishes and the recommendations of the Inter- American Commission for Human Rights;
- reminding the authorities that the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties 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:

Governor of Guerrero

Lic. Zeferino Torreblanca Galindo
Gobernador del Estado de Guerrero
Palacio de Gobierno, Edificio Centro, piso 2, Ciudad de los Servicios
CP 39075, Chilpancingo, Guerrero, MÉXICO

Email: gobernador@guerrero.gob.mx

Fax: +52 747 471 9956

Salutation: Señor Gobernador / Dear Governor

Attorney General of Guerrero

Lic. Eduardo Murueta Urrutia
Procurador del Estado de Guerrero
Carretera Nacional México-Acapulco Km. 6+300
Tramo Chilpancingo-Petaquillos
Chilpancingo 39090, Guerrero, MÉXICO

Fax: +52 747 472 2328

Email: cprocurador@pgjgro.gob.mx

Salutation: Dear Attorney / Señor Procurador

President of the Human Rights Commission of Guerrero

Lic. Juan Alarcón Hernández
Presidente de la Comisión de Defensa de los Derechos Humanos del Estado de Guerrero (Coddehum)
Avda. Juárez, Esq. Galo Soberón y Parra
Col. Centro, 39000, Chilpancingo, Guerrero, MEXICO

E-mail: coddehum@prodigy.net.mx

Fax: +52 747 471 2190 (if someone answers say "me da tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Dear President/ Señor Presidente

COPIES TO:

Human rights organisation: Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña "Tlachinollan" AC., Calle Mina, no. 77, Col. Centro, Tlapa de Comonfort, C.P. 41304, Guerrero, 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 4 April 2008.