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Fear for safety / "Disappearance"

14 March 1994

MEXICO

Juan MENDOZA LORENZO, 47, from San Miguel, Ocosingo
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Leonardo MéNDEZ SÁNCHEZ, 19, from ejido La Garrucha
Vicente LÓPEZ HERNÁNDEZ, 23, from ejido Patihuitz
Manuel SÁNCHEZ GONZÁLEZ " "
Enrique GONZÁLEZ gARCÍA, 26 " "
Marcelo PéREZ JIMÉNEZ, 23, " "
Nicolás CORTÉZ HERNÁNDEZ, " "
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Marcos GUZMÁN PéREZ, " "
Diego AGUILAR HERNÁNDEZ " "
Fernando RUIZ GUZMÁN, " "
Antonio GUZMÁN GONZÁLEZ, " "

- all Tzeltal Indians in Chiapas

Amnesty International is deeply concerned for the safety of the above named Tzeltal Indian peasants after receiving reports that they have "disappeared".

Their whereabouts have remained unknown since they were reportedly arrested by members of the Mexican army during the first week of January 1994, apparently on suspicion of belonging to the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN)*, Zapatista National Liberation Army.

The remoteness of their communities and the fact that most of their families speak little or no Spanish has delayed this information reaching Amnesty International.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 1 January 1994, the EZLN, an armed opposition group, took control of several towns in the state of Chiapas. Heavy fighting between the EZLN and government troops ensued for several days. On 12 January the government declared a ceasefire, although there were reports of continuing land attacks by the armed forces during the following days. An Amnesty International delegation visiting the area in late January, confirmed earlier reports of a number of human rights abuses, such as the extrajudicial executions of at least five rebels and the torture of rebel and civilian detainees at the hands of the security forces.

The delegation reminded the Mexican government of its responsibility to effectively investigate and punish the perpetrators of such abuses. However, despite limited investigations into the abuses, no one has yet been brought to justice. This impunity serves only to make further violations likely.

Chiapas has long been the scene of human rights violations by the security forces in the context of land disputes and allegations of electoral fraud. Amnesty International has over the last few years documented these abuses, including massive and arbitrary arrests, torture, ill-treatment and political killings. A large number of the victims belong to the poorest sectors of the population. Very rarely have those responsible been brought to justice.

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

- expressing grave concern for the safety of the Tzeltal Indian peasants (naming some or all), who have not been since their reported arrest in early January by the Mexican army, in their Chiapas' communities.
- urging an immediate and thorough investigation into their whereabouts, asking to be informed about the findings;
- urging that if any of the above mentioned are in detention, that they should be humanely treated and allowed access to their relatives, interpreters, doctors and lawyers, as well as human rights monitors.
- calling for those responsible for the above mentioned arbitrary arrest and possible "disappearance" to be brought to justice;
- urging an effective end to the impunity which appears to benefit the perpetrators of human rights violations reported in Chiapas.

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) Weekly magazine

Sr. Editor

Proceso

Fresas 13, Colonia del Valle, 03100 México 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 25 April 1994.