

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 41/12/96

UA 47/96

Fear for safety

27 February 1996

MEXICO

José Barrón Rosales, radio journalist

According to latest reports, José Barrón Rosales, who survived a recent attempt on his life, has continued to receive threats because of his work as a radio journalist. Amnesty International is seriously concerned for his safety.

On 28 January 1996 José Barrón Rosales, who works for *Radio Huayacocotla* in the state of Veracruz, was shot at in the community of El Llano by a gunman who hurled abuse against his work in local radio. José Barrón Rosales survived unharmed. However, his assailant has not been brought to justice, despite the fact that José Barrón Rosales and other witnesses identified him by name in an official complaint before the relevant local authorities.

Radio Huayacocotla is an independent station broadcasting in indigenous languages. Its programmes include a strong advocacy for human rights, in a region where rural violence against the indigenous, by powerful landowners frequently colluding with local authorities has continued to be widely reported.

Most of the human rights violations are reported in the context of land-tenure conflicts. *Radio Huayacocotla* has received frequent threats, reportedly from those criticized in its programmes describing the human rights situation of the region, where impunity for perpetrators of violations is widespread.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has recorded a long-lasting pattern of rural violence related to land-tenure conflicts in the area of the Huastecas, in the state of Veracruz. Huayacocotla is a small town in that region, from where human rights violations have been frequently reported to the organization.

In most cases, victims of these conflicts are the poor indigenous peasants who lose their lands to big ranchers, known as "*caciques*". The close relationship that often exists between *caciques* and local authorities seriously undermines the legal rights to land tenure of Indian peasants and places them at risk of human rights violations.

The work of local human rights defenders, including the advocacy of human rights by some local media, particularly *Radio Huayacocotla*, has contributed to prevent further escalation of the pattern of violence.

The harassment of government critics and human rights monitors is one of Amnesty International's main concerns in Mexico at present. 1996 has seen a huge increase in harassment against human rights defenders, most of whom are being targeted for their work in behalf of the community (for example, see UA 37/96, AMR 41/06/96, 15 February 1996; UA 27/96, AMR 41/04/96, 2 February; UA 12/96, AMR 41/02/96, 22 January; and UA 09/96, AMR 41/01/96, 16 January).

Amnesty International has recorded a long-term pattern of harassment and threats related to professional groups such as journalists, lawyers, church members (for example see UA 203/95, AMR 41/19/95, 18 August 1995 and update AMR 41/28/95, 6 October).

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

- expressing concern for the safety of José Barrón Rosales following the latest

threats against his work as a journalist for *Radio Huayacocotla*;
 - calling for an immediate and impartial investigation into the threats, and the attack suffered by José Barrón Rosales in El Llano, Veracruz, on 28 January 1996, and that all those responsible be brought to justice;
 - requesting to be kept informed about the findings and results of the investigations.

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

Salutation: Sr. President/Dear President

2) Governor of the state of Veracruz

Lic. Patricio Chirinos Calero
 Gobernador del Estado de Veracruz
 Palacio de Gobierno
 Jalapa
 Estado de Veracruz, México

Telegrams: Gobernador Chirinos Calero, Veracruz, México

Faxes: +52 281 82167

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador/Dear Governor

COPIES TO:

1) Daily newspaper

Sr. Editor
La Jornada
 Balderas 68
 06050 México D.F., México

2) Human Rights Organization

Centro de Derechos Humanos "Miguel Agustín Pro"

Faxes: +525 208 7547

E-mail: prodh@laneta.apc.org

and to diplomatic representatives of México accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 20 April 1996.