

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 41/13/97

UA 78/97

Possible extrajudicial execution/
Fear of torture

20 March 1997

MEXICO
(Chiapas)

Killed: Fernando González Pérez, aged 22
Carmen González Gómez (f), aged 25
Juan N_____, aged 17
Miguel Gómez Hernández, aged 80

Arrested: 25 community members

Four people have been left dead and four wounded following a police operation against members of an indigenous community in the state of Chiapas. Twenty-seven others were arrested and are feared to be at risk of torture in custody.

On 14 March 1997, members of the *Policía de Seguridad Pública* (PSP), Public Security Police, in three jeeps and a helicopter, arrived at the community of San Pedro Nixtalucum, in the municipality of San Juan El Bosque, Chiapas, and arrested four members of the community reportedly involved in a local dispute. On attempting to leave the village with those detained, a group of protesters blocked the path of the PSP jeeps.

Reports indicate that the security forces then opened fire on the protesters from the helicopter and from the vehicles on the ground. Fernando González Pérez was killed immediately. Carmen González Gómez and Juan N_____ died later from bullet wounds. Eighty-year-old Miguel Gómez was wounded then subsequently killed when reportedly run over by a PSP vehicle making its exit from the village. Six police agents were also reportedly injured in the incident which lasted twenty minutes.

Later in the day, the police returned, accompanied by soldiers, and arrested 27 members of the community and took them to the state capital, Tuxtla Gutiérrez.

On 17 March, two of those detained were released without charge. The other 25 were charged with murder, illegal privation of liberty and causing injury to persons and damage to property. Reports indicate that those detained showed signs of having been beaten during detention. Amnesty International is concerned that the detainees may be subject to further ill-treatment or torture while in prison.

Arrest warrants have been issued for the detention of a further 35 inhabitants of San Pedro Nixtalucum, alleged to have been involved in the original local dispute.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International is seriously concerned about continuing human rights violations in the state of Chiapas, particularly in view of an increasing wave of arrests, harassment and threats against members of peasant communities.

A particular source of conflict has been disputes within communities between the followers of the ruling *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), Institutional Revolutionary Party, and supporters of the opposition *Partido de la Revolución Democrática* (PRD), Party of the Democratic Revolution, often related to issues of land tenure. Amnesty International has for many years documented the pattern of human rights abuses committed by hired gunmen acting on behalf of local chiefs linked to the PRI.

The tense situation that prevails in the state has been made worse by the reported unwillingness of the security forces to act against gunmen linked to the PRI and to allegedly side with supporters of the PRI against those of the PRD.

The recent arrest and subsequent release of two Jesuit priests and two peasant leaders (UA 64/97, AMR 41/10/97, 10 March 1997, and follow-ups AMR 41/11/97, 12 March 1997, and AMR 41/12/97, 14 March 1997) was also related to a land tenure dispute and reportedly violent police action was used to break up a group of protestors blocking a road.

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

- condemning the apparent extrajudicial executions of Fernando González Pérez, Carmen González Gómez, Juan N_____ and Miguel Gómez Hernández by the Public Security Police;
- urging a prompt and full investigation into their deaths and asking to be kept informed of any findings; urging that those found responsible to be brought to justice;
- seeking assurances that all 25 detainees, and any other persons subsequently detained, are treated humanely and allowed access to doctors, relatives and lawyers;
- expressing deep alarm about continuing human rights violations in the state of Chiapas, and at the apparent lack of effective action on the part of the authorities to stop them and to end the impunity currently enjoyed by most perpetrators.

APPEALS TO:

1) Attorney General of the Republic
 Lic. Jorge Madrazo Cuéllar
 Procuraduría General de la República
 Paseo de la Reforma y Violeta
 Col. Guerrero
 06300 México D.F., MEXICO

Telegrams: Sr. Procurador de la República, México D.F.

Fax: +52 5 626 4419

Salutation: Sr. Procurador de la República / Dear Attorney General

2) Governor of the State of Chiapas
 Lic. Julio César Ruiz Ferro
 Gobernador del estado de Chiapas
 Palacio de Gobierno
 Av. Central y Primera Oriente
 Colonia Centro, 29009 Tuxtla Gutiérrez
 Estado de Chiapas, MEXICO

Telegrams: Gobernador Ruiz Ferro, Chiapas, México

Fax: +52 961 20917 (if voice, ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation; Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor

3) Attorney General of the State of Chiapas

Lic. Jorge Hernández Aguilar
 Procuraduría General de Chiapas, Mexico

Telegrams: Sr. Procurador de Chiapas, México

Fax: +52 9 616 5376 (if voice, ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Sr. Procurador de Chiapas/ Dear Attorney

COPIES TO:

1) Human rights organizations
Sres. Centro de Derechos Humanos
San Bartolomé de las Casas
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2) Daily newspaper
Sr. Editor
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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 1 May 1997.