

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 41/20/97

EXTRA 54/97

Fear of imminent deportation of human rights
defenders

18 April 1997

MEXICO Vilma Núñez de Escorcía, (f), Nicaraguan national
Benjamín Cuéllar, Salvadorean national

Amnesty International is extremely concerned that two international human rights defenders may be facing imminent and arbitrary deportation from Mexico where they are currently investigating human rights violations. The organization believes that this would establish a very negative precedent for the international monitoring of human rights in Mexico and represent a grave setback for human rights protection in that country.

Vilma Núñez de Escorcía and Benjamín Cuéllar, members of a delegation of the *Federación Internacional de Derechos Humanos* (FIDH), International Federation of Human Rights (based in France), had their visas withdrawn by members of Mexican immigration in Acapulco, state of Guerrero, on 16 April 1997. Vilma Núñez and Benjamín Cuéllar, as well as two other delegates of the FIDH, arrived in Mexico a week earlier, invited by a number of Mexican human rights non-governmental organizations to carry out investigations into the human rights situation in the states of Guerrero, Oaxaca and Chiapas.

The delegation had visited a prison in Acapulco and gathered testimonies from torture victims on the day that their visas were withdrawn. The other two members of the delegation, lawyer Gilberte Deboisvieux (f) from France and Fernando Mejía (no nationality given), did not have their visas withdrawn.

Vilma Núñez is director of the *Centro Nicaragüense de Derechos Humanos* (CENIDH), Nicaraguan Centre for Human Rights. Benjamín Cuéllar is director of the *Instituto de Derechos Humanos de la Universidad Centroamericana* (IDHUCA), Central American University Human Rights Institute, El Salvador.

Under Article 33 of the Mexican Constitution the government may deport foreign nationals who engage in open political activism in the country. Although ill-defined, Article 33 is normally interpreted as applying to foreign nationals involved in Mexican party politics. Amnesty International is alarmed at the arbitrary use of Article 33 against foreign nationals solely for their peaceful activities on behalf of victims of violations of human rights.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has condemned the Mexican Government for similarly expelling other human rights defenders in the past. On 23 June 1995, Fathers Rodolfo Izal Erloz (Spanish national), Loren Riebe (USA national) and Jorge Baron Gutlein (Argentine national), were arbitrarily arrested and expelled by the Mexican Government. The three were prominent human rights activists in Chiapas (See UA 148/95, AMR 41/12/95, 23 June 1995 and Further information AMR 41/13/95, 26 June 1995. See also *Central America and Human rights violations in Mexico: A challenge for the nineties*, AMR 41/21/95, November 1995).

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

- expressing serious concern that Vilma Núñez and Benjamin Cuéllar, Central American human rights defenders, have had their visas withdrawn by Mexican immigration officials, on 16 April 1997, in Acapulco, state of Guerrero;

- urging that they be allowed to continue their peaceful activities in Mexico on behalf of a recognized international human rights organization and that their access to victims of human rights is not impeded during their visit.

APPEALS TO:

1. Minister of the Interior:

Lic. Emilio Chuayffet Chemor

Secretario de Gobernación

Secretaría de Gobernación

Bucarelli 99, 1er piso, Col Juárez, 06699 México DF, MEXICO

Telegrams: Secretario de Gobernación, México DF, Mexico

Faxes: + 52 5 546 5350

Salutation: Sr. Secretario / Dear Minister

2. Minister of Foreign Affairs

Lic. José Ángel Gurría Treviño

Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores

Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores

Av. Ricardo Flores Magón No.1, Colonia Nonoalco Tlatelolco

06995 México D.F., MEXICO

Telegrams: Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F., Mexico

Faxes: +525 782 4109

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/ Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

1. Human rights organizations

Centro de Derechos Humanos

"Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez" A.C.

Puebla N. 153 Col. Roma,

06700 México D.F. MEXICO

Centro Nicaragüense de Derechos Humanos (CENIDH)

De la Texaco Montoya 1 ½ c. al Sur

Apartado 4402

Managua, NICARAGUA

Instituto de Derechos Humanos

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"José Simeón Cañas" (IDHUCA)

Final autopista Sur,

Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas

San Salvador, EL SALVADOR

2. Newspaper

Sr. Director

La Jornada

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 18 May 1997.