

UA 120/96

Fear for safety

7 May 1996

MEXICO Alberto Velázquez, human rights activist
Guillermo Godínez Ramírez, human rights activist
Ricardo Ayala López, human rights activist
Jaime Ramírez Maza, human rights activist
Francisco Molina Cortez and his wife, human rights activists
Amando Herrera Ríos, aged 76, member of the Jesuit community
Eugenio Maurer Abalós, Jesuit priest
Alberto Velázquez Cruz, member of the Jesuit community
Salvador Quintero González, member of the Jesuit community
Pablo Olivares Martínez, Jesuit priest

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of inhabitants of San Jerónimo, in Bachajón, state of Chiapas, including those named above, following a violent attack against the community by a paramilitary group. Fears are growing that the violence may spread to neighbouring communities.

At around 6.45pm on 5 May 1996, members of the paramilitary group "Los Chincholines", a heavily-armed youth group reportedly under instructions of the local mayor, a member of the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, PRI, the Institutional Revolutionary Party, raided San Jerónimo. The *Centro de Derechos Indígenas A.C.*, CEDIAC, Centre for the Defence of Indigenous Rights A.C., the Jesuit mission house, the doors of the church, two cars belonging to the Jesuit Fathers, some local houses, the primary school, and a local health centre run by nuns, were set on fire.

CEDIAC members, Guillermo Godínez Ramírez, Ricardo Ayala López, Alberto Velázquez and Jaime Ramírez Maza, were inside the Centre when the attack took place. According to reports, they managed to escape to the mountains and after walking all night arrived in San Cristóbal de las Casas. Latest information indicates that, due to threats, they have not returned to San Jerónimo.

Amando Herrera Ríos, Eugenio Maurer Abalós, Alberto Velázquez Cruz, Salvador Quintero González and Pablo Olivares Martínez, all Jesuits, were in the church at the time of the raid. Although they, too, managed to escape, Amnesty International remains concerned for their safety.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 4 May 1996, local elections took place in Guadalupe Paxilá, state of Chiapas, which the PRI lost, and during which members of "Los Chincholines" reportedly harassed and intimidated voters. On 5 May, about 300 people attempted to present a complaint about this intimidation to the *Public Ministerio*, Ministry Public at Ocosingo, the closest town, but they were not received. At 6.30pm there was a clash between the 300 people and "Los Chincholines", during which at least three people were reportedly killed, including the leader of the paramilitary group, Gerónimo Gómez Guzmán. Fifteen minutes later, as described above, the paramilitary group went to Bachajón, one of the closest communities, where people had reportedly voted against the PRI.

Amnesty International has recorded a long-lasting pattern of human rights abuses committed by hired gunmen acting on behalf of local chiefs linked to the ruling PRI party. Amnesty International has also documented scores of gross human rights violations reported in Chiapas since the beginning of the January 1994 conflict. Two Amnesty International delegations visited Chiapas, in January

1994 and January 1995, to document some of the cases reported to the organization. Amnesty International has continued to closely monitor the situation in Chiapas.

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

- calling for immediate measures to guarantee the safety of the inhabitants of the community of San Jerónimo, Bachajón, state of Chiapas, and neighbouring communities following the attack on 5 May 1996 (naming some of those above if possible);
- calling for a prompt, full and impartial investigation into the attack, and for those responsible to be brought to justice, asking to be kept informed of proceedings.

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 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 Ferero, Chiapas, México

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador/Dear Governor

3) Minister of the Interior

Lic. Emilio Chuayffet Chemor
Secretario de la Gobernación
Secretaría de la Gobernación
Bucareli 99, 1er piso
Col. Juárez, 06699 México DF, MÉXICO

Telegrams: Secretario Gobernación, México D.F., México

Faxes: + 52 5 546 5350

Salutation: Sr. Secretario/Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

1) Daily newspaper

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

2) Human Rights Organization

Sres. CONPAZ

Apartado Postal 41
San Cristobal de las Casas
29200 Chiapas, MEXICO

3) Human Rights Organization

Sres. Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Bartolomé de las Casas
Apartado Postal 178
San Cristobal de las Casas
29200 Chiapas, MEXICO
Fax: 52 967 83551

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 30 June 1996.