

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 41/24/97

UA 110/97 Apparent extrajudicial execution / Fear for safety 22 April 1997

MEXICOGerardo Hurtado Arias (19), member of *Organización Campesina de la Sierra del Sur*, (OCSS), Southern Sierra Peasant Organization

Amnesty International is appalled by the apparent extrajudicial execution of Gerardo Hurtado Arias, who was reportedly killed by paramilitaries with links to local authorities on 20 April 1997 in Tepetixtla, in the Sierra de Coyuca de Benítez, in the state of Guerrero.

He is the ninth member of the OCSS to be murdered for political reasons in the last 22 months. His killing has further heightened fears for the safety of other members of the OCSS, particularly the leadership, who have faced a systematic campaign of assassination, attacks, threats and imprisonment since the foundation of the organization in 1994.

Gerardo Hurtado Arias was one of the only leaders of the OCSS to risk staying in Tepetixtla. Last month he received death threats for his activism and was severely beaten by unidentified assailants. He was shot and killed at 7pm on 20 April as he left a wedding he had attended with friends in the outskirts of Tepetixtla.

A female activist in the OCSS said, "Everybody in the organization is being threatened. They have got it in for us because we don't stop fighting for our rights", (*"Todo los de la organización estamos amenazados. Nos tienen coraje porque no dejamos de luchar por nuestros derechos"*).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

OCSS members have previously suffered attacks and death threats in connection with their activities on behalf of the local indigenous and peasant populations.

Since the massacre of 17 peasants on 28 June 1995 in Aguas Blancas in an ambush staged by Guerrero state police and government officials (see UA 159/95, AMR 41/15/95, 5 July 1995, and follow-ups AMR 41/16/95, 26 July 1995 and AMR 41/18/95, 17 August 1995), a wave of violence has swept through the state. Many of those killed were OCSS members. The climate of violence has intensified since 28 June 1996, when relatives and OCSS members held a memorial service on the anniversary of the massacre, at which the (previously unknown) *Ejército Popular Revolucionario* (EPR) made an appearance.

Although the EPR and the OCSS have made public statements denying any links between them, the government has launched a campaign against members of the OCSS for allegedly belonging to the EPR (see NWS 118/96, AMR 41/31/96, 28 June 1996). Benigno Guzmán, leader of the OCSS, has been detained since January 1997 (see UA 30/97, AMR 41/03/97, 28 January 1997).

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

- calling for a prompt and full investigation into the apparent extrajudicial execution of Gerardo Hurtado Arias;
- urging that those responsible be brought to justice;
- calling for immediate measures to ensure the safety of all members of the OCSS and other peasant organizations working in the state of Guerrero;
- expressing deep alarm about the continuing human rights violations in the state of Guerrero and 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) 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) 515 1794 / 542 1648 (voice line: ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Sr. Presidente / Dear President

2) Interim Governor of the State of Guerrero

Angel Heladio Aguirre Rivero

Gobernador Interino del Estado de Guerrero

Palacio de Gobierno

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39000 Chilpancingo, Guerrero, México

Telegrams: Gobernador Aguirre, Chilpancingo, Guerrero, México

Faxes: + 52 747 23072

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor

3) Attorney General of the Republic

Lic. Jorge Madrazo Cuéllar

Procurador General de la República

Procuraduría General de la República

Paseo de la Reforma y Violeta

Col. Guerrero

06300 México D.F., MEXICO

Telegrams: Procurador Madrazo, México D.F., México

Faxes: (+52 5) 626 4419

Salutation: Sr. Procurador General / Dear Attorney General

COPIES TO:

1) Peasant organization

Sres.

Unión de Organizaciones

de la Sierra Sur (UOSS)

Calle Zapata No. 17

Col. Fraccionamiento 20 de Noviembre

Chilpancingo, Guerrero, MEXICO

2) Newspaper

Sr. Editor

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 10 June 1997.