

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 41/38/96

EXTRA 112/96

Possible extrajudicial execution /
"Disappearances" / Fear of torture

19 July 1996

MEXICO Killed: Manuel Martínez de la Torre, indigenous peasant
 "Disappeared": Valentín de la Torre Mendoza
 Rafael Vázquez de la Torre
 Arrested: Miguel Vázquez Mendoza
 Miguel Vázquez Robles
 Jose Angel Mendoza Gómez
 Melitón de Jesus Mendoza Gómez
 Manuel Mendoza Vázquez
 Jose Antonio Alcazar Hidalgo
 Marco Antonio Vázquez Ramírez
 Juan C. Hidalgo Gómez
 Jose Angel Alcazar Hidalgo
 Jose Alcazar Gómez
 Domingo Gómez Martínez
 Bartolo Jiménez Hidalgo

A joint police and paramilitary operation against two neighbouring communities in Chiapas state have left one person dead and two others "disappeared". Twelve other people, mainly indigenous Tzotziles, have been arrested and are feared to be at risk of torture in custody.

On 17 July 1996, San Sebastian and Señor del Pozo, two hamlets in the community of Venustiano Carranza, Chiapas state, were raided by heavily armed members of the *Policía Judicial del Estado* (PJE), State Judicial Police and the paramilitary group "*Alianza San Bartolomé de los Llanos*". The latter is a group linked to the party in power, *Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, PRI, the Institutional Revolutionary Party. Helicopters were used in the attack.

The police and paramilitaries opened fire against community members, including women and children, resulting in the killing of Manuel Martínez de la Torre.

Twelve people, most of whom are members of the non-violent *Organización Campesina Emiliano Zapata*, OCEZ, Emiliano Zapata Peasants Organization, were arrested. In the past OCEZ members have suffered attacks and death threats in connection with their activities on behalf of the local indigenous and peasant population.

The day before, 16 July, two other Tzotziles members of OCEZ from Venustiano Carranza, Valentín de la Torre Mendoza and Rafael Vázquez de la Torre, were abducted by members of the PJE and the paramilitary group. They have not been seen since.

Amnesty International remains seriously concerned for the safety of inhabitants of San Sebastian and Señor del Pozo. Some 300 state police are reported to still be in the area.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International is seriously concerned about continuing human rights violations in the state of Chiapas, particularly in view of the current wave of arrests, threats and harassment against members of the peasant communities apparently targeted exclusively because of their activities on behalf of the peasant population.

Three Amnesty International delegations have visited Chiapas: in January 1994, January 1995 and June 1996. During these research visits Amnesty International has recorded a long-term pattern of rural violence relating to land-tenure conflicts in Chiapas state. Particularly during the last visit the organization was able to document the pattern of human rights abuses committed by hired gunmen acting on behalf of local chiefs linked to the ruling PRI party.

In May 1996, 23 families fled their homes in Bachajon, state of Chiapas, and since then have taken "refuge" in the auditorium of Tuxtla Gutiérrez, the capital of Chiapas. They have been unable to return to their homes out of fear for their safety, fears which have been heightened by reports that members of paramilitary groups, who ransacked and burned their homes, are still "patrolling" at liberty and threatening villagers with complete impunity (see UA 120/96, AMR 41/21/96, 7 May 1996 and update 10 May).

The failure to bring to justice those responsible for human rights violations and the lack of effective action to stop them and to end such impunity, has apparently helped to fuel an increasing number of threats and attacks against human rights defenders and peasant activists. A well known non-governmental organization, based in Chiapas, has just released a document on the 102 killings reportedly committed by members of the security forces and death squads in the period January to April 1996 in Chiapas State.

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

- condemning the apparent extrajudicial execution of Manuel Martínez de la Torre by members of the State Judicial Police and the paramilitary group linked to the PRI, "Alianza San Bartolomé de los Llanos", urging a prompt and full investigation into his death and asking to be kept informed of any findings;
- calling for an immediate and impartial investigation into the whereabouts of Valentín de la Torre Mendoza and Rafael Vázquez de la Torre who "disappeared" on 16 July 1996, urging that if in detention they be humanely treated and allowed access to relatives, doctors, interpreters and lawyers;
- expressing concern for the safety of all the peasants detained (name some), in Venustiano Carranza, state of Chiapas on 17 July 1996 and urging that they be charged with a recognizable offence or released immediately;
- expressing deep alarm about continuing human rights violations in the state of Chiapas, and the apparent lack of effective action to stop them and to end the impunity currently enjoyed by most perpetrators.

APPEALS TO:

1) 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

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

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador/Dear Governor

2) 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) Human Rights Organization
Comisión de Derechos Humanos "Fray Bartolome de las Casas"
Apartado postal 178
San Cristóbal de las Casas
29250 Chiapas
email: CDH-BCASAS@LANETA.ORG.APC

2) Human Rights Organization
Organización Campesina Emililano Zapata (OCEZ)
Casa del Pueblo
Venustiano Carranza
Chiapas, MEXICO
Faxes: +52 968 70006

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 25 August 1996.