

UA 190/96

Torture / Fear for Safety

30 July 1996

MEXICO

(Guerrero State) José Nava Andrade, peasants' rights activist
Nicolasa Costeño de Nava, his wife
María Trinidad Costeño, his daughter, aged 19
Pascasio Nava Costeño, his son, aged 16
Guillermo Nava Costeño, his son, aged 18
Eva Noemí Nava Costeño, his daughter, aged 13
Sergio Raúl Nava Costeño, his son, aged 8
Gustavo Nava Costeño, his son, aged 2

Leticia Priani García (f), aged 26, human rights defender
Verónica Velasco Gaona (f), aged 24, human rights defender

There are serious concerns for the safety of the people named above, members of the peasant community and human rights activists, as a result of a campaign of threats and intimidation apparently in connection with their activities on behalf of the local peasant population.

José Nava Andrade a peasant activist leader of *Organización de Pueblos y Colonias de Guerrero* (OPCG), Organization of Villages and Communities of Guerrero, has been forced to flee from his home in Chilpancingo, Guerrero state, to the capital, Mexico City, in fear for his safety. His wife, Nicolasa Costeño de Nava, and their children (named above) have also been forced to move. Fears have been heightened by reports that their temporary accommodation in Mexico City is under constant surveillance and that José Nava Andrade and members of his family are being followed by unidentified men when leaving the house.

José Nava Andrade was kidnapped on 2 July 1996 and tortured for four days by members of the security forces of Guerrero state. He was reportedly hanged by leg irons, beaten with sticks and given electric shocks, while being asked for the names of the leaders of the new guerrilla EPR (see background information), the places where they meet and other details. On 8 July 1996, while in hospital, he was again threatened in order to stop him reporting the torture. He was told: "*si aprecias a tu familia, no abras la boca, de lo contrario vas a amanecer con la panza verde*" - "If you love your family do not open your mouth or you will wake up dead."

Leticia Priani García and Verónica Velasco Gaona, human rights activists and members of *Acción de los Cristianos para la Abolición de la Tortura* (ACAT), Christian Action for the Abolition of Torture, have also been threatened, their offices are being watched and their telephones tapped. ACAT is a non-governmental organization, based in Mexico City, which is acting on behalf of José Nava Andrade and his family, providing them with legal and medical counsel. On 25 July 1996, Leticia Priani García was followed by a car from the ACAT offices to the University. On 23 July 1996, Verónica Velasco was followed by unidentified men as she was leaving the house where the Nava Andrade family are temporarily resident on her way to the ACAT offices.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since the massacre of 17 peasants on 28 June 1995 in Aguas Blancas, the result of an ambush staged by Guerrero state police and government officials (see UA 159/95, AMR 41/15/95, 5 July 1995, and follow-ups), a wave of violence has swept through the state. This climate of violence has intensified since 28

June 1996, when relatives and members of the *Organización Campesina de la Sierra del Sur* (OCSS), Southern Sierra Peasants' Organization, held a memorial service commemorating the massacre, at which a previously unknown armed opposition group, the *Ejército Revolucionario Popular* (ERP), the People's Revolutionary Army, made an appearance. Since then many members of peasant organizations have been arrested and others have reportedly left Guerrero state and gone into hiding, fearing for their safety, given the prevailing climate of systematic human rights violations and impunity in the state (see NWS 118/96, AMR 41/31/96, 28 June, and EXTRA 103/96 AMR 41/34/96, 5 July 1996, and follow up 18 July).

Amnesty International continues to receive reports of serious human rights violations in Guerrero state. The organization has repeatedly protested to the Mexican Government about the widespread use of torture and ill-treatment and about the lack of safeguards to provide human rights defenders with a safe environment in which to carry out their work. Community activists and their relatives continue to face threats, persecution and imprisonment.

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

- expressing deep concern for the safety of José Nava Andrade and his family, reportedly harassed in connection with their activities on behalf of the local peasant population, and for the safety of Leticia Priani García and Verónica Velasco Gaona, members of ACAT reportedly targeted for their work on behalf of the Nava Andrade family;
- calling for an investigation into the allegations of torture of José Nava Andrade and for anyone found guilty to be brought to justice;
- seeking absolute guarantees for the safety of the Nava Andrade family, Leticia Priani García and Verónica Velasco Gaona;
- expressing deep alarm at continuing human rights violations in the state of Guerrero, and the apparent lack of effective action 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 (voice line: ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

OR + 52 5 271 1764

Salutation: Sr. Presidente / Dear President

2) Attorney of the state of Guerrero

Lic. Antonio Hernández Díaz

Procurador del Estado de Guerrero

Carretera Nacional México-Acapulco Km. 6.300

CP 39.000, Chilpancingo, Guerrero, MEXICO.

Telegrams: Sr. Procurador, Guerrero, México

Faxes: + 52 747 223 28 (voice line: ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Sr. Procurador/ Dear Attorney

3) Interim Governor of the state of Guerrero

Ángel Heladio Aguirre Rivero

Gobernador Interino del Estado de Guerrero
Palacio de Gobierno
Plaza Primer Congreso de Anahuac
39000 Chilpancingo, Guerrero, Mexico

Telegrams: Gobernador Aguirre, Chilpancingo, Guerrero, México

Faxes: + 52 747 23072 (voice line: ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor

COPIES TO:

1) Centro de DD.HH.

Liga Mexicana por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos
Avenida Azcapotzalco N275, Col. Claveria
02090 México D.F. MEXICO

Fax: 525 399 1336 (voice line: ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

E-mail: limeddh@laneta.apc.org

2) Centro de DD.HH.

Acción de los Cristianos para la Abolición de la Tortura
Interior Zona Comercial C.U.
Apdo 70-634, Adm 70
04511, México DF, México

Faxes: + 52 5 264 7332 (voice line: ask "me puede dar tono de fax, por favor")

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 September 1996.