

UA 295/01

Fear for

MEXICO Aldo González (m)

Melina Hernández Sosa (f)

Other members of the Union of Organizations of the Sierra Juárez of Oaxaca,
Union de Organizaciones de La Sierra de Oaxaca (UNOSJO)

An organisation working for the rights of indigenous people in southern Mexico has received an email death threat. Their work has frequently been opposed by local political bosses (*caciques*), and Amnesty International is concerned for their safety.

The *Union de Organizaciones de La Sierra de Oaxaca (UNOSJO)*, Union of Organizations of the Sierra Juárez of Oaxaca, works to promote and defend indigenous rights in the Sierra Juarez region of Oaxaca state. Two members of the organisation, Aldo González and Melina Hernández Sosa, are felt to be at particular risk, as their work has been particularly high-profile.

The e-mail death threat, which arrived at the UNOSJO offices on 1 November, said: "this is the moment to execute all those who feed off the people, people like you who deceive and make promises, I know who you are..."
"es el momento de ejecutar a todos aquellos que se alimentan del pueblo, si, como tú que engañas y prometes se quien eres..."

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Human rights defenders make a vital contribution to strengthening the rule of law, civil society and the development of institutions to protect human rights. However, in Mexico those who struggle to defend the rights of others have often been the first to come under attack, and to have their own rights violated and their safety threatened. Human rights lawyer Digna Ochoa was assassinated on 19 October; earlier this month human rights defenders in Mexico City and in other parts of the country received death threats. Human rights defenders in Oaxaca have faced repeated threats and harassment for a number of years. The authorities have consistently failed to bring those responsible to justice.

Caciques are powerful figures in many areas of Mexico, particularly in southern states such as Oaxaca and Chiapas. They frequently control the political and economic life of rural areas, and can act with impunity because they enjoy the tacit or direct support of the local authorities and state security forces.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish, English or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of members of Aldo González, Melina Hernández Sosa and other members of the *Union de Organizaciones de La Sierra de Oaxaca*, who received an email death threat on 1 November 2001;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee the safety of those at risk and provide them with appropriate protection;
- calling for an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the threat, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- reminding the authorities of the right of human rights defenders to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties.

APPEALS TO:

[please note that the telephone codes for Mexico are changing. Some of the numbers below have not been updated and you will be able to omit the (51) or (55); however, with other numbers you will have to include them.]

Governor of Oaxaca State

Lic. José Murat Casab
 Gobernador del Estado de Oaxaca
 Palacio de Gobierno
 Bustamente s/n
 Oaxaca 68000
 Estado de Oaxaca
 MEXICO

Telegrams: Gobernador del Estado, Oaxaca

Fax: + 52 9(51) 516 3737

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor

Attorney General of Oaxaca

Lic. Sergio H. Santibañez
 Procurador del Estado de Oaxaca
 Avenida Luis Echeverría s/n, La Experimental
 San Antonio de la Cal, Oaxaca
 Oaxaca 71236 MÉXICO

Fax: +52 9(51) 511 5519

Salutation: Dear Attorney/ Señor Procurador

Human Rights Commission of Oaxaca

Dr. Sergio Segreste Ríos
 Presidente de la Comisión de Derechos Humanos del Estado de Oaxaca
 Calle de los Derechos Humanos No. 210
 Col. América, 68050, Oaxaca, Oax. MÉXICO

Faxes: +52 9(51) 51351-85/ 351-97/ 351-91

Salutation: Dear Attorney/ Señor Procurador

Minister of the Interior

Lic. Santiago Creel
 Secretario de Gobernación
 Secretaría de Gobernación
 Bucareli 99, 1er. piso, Col. Juárez
 México D.F., C.P.06699
 MEXICO

Telegrams: Secretario de Gobernacion, Mexico D.F., Mexico

Fax: + 52 (55) 5546 5350 / 546 7388

Salutation: Señor Secretario / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:Human Rights Network of Oaxaca

Red Oaxaqueña de Derechos Humanos
 c/o Centro de Derechos Humanos 'Los Príncipes'
 González Ortega No415, Oaxaca 68000
 Oaxaca, 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 4 January 2002.