

EXTERNAL

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Death threats / Fear for safety

9 December 1996

MEXICO Juan José Pelayo Zepeda, aged 32, human rights activist and priest

On 1 December 1996 Juan José Pelayo Zepeda, human rights activist and priest, received the latest in a series of death threats warning him to stop his work on behalf of his community. A member of the *Academia Jalisciense de Derechos Humanos*, Academy Jalisciense of Human Rights, he has long been working with peasant and indigenous communities, mainly Nahuátl, in the mountain range of Manantlán in Jalisco State.

The repeated threats, which first began in September 1996, have been issued by the area's *caciques*, powerful and rich individuals, apparently as a result of the activities of the *Unión de Pueblos de la Sierra de Manantlán*, Unity of Villages of the Manantlán Mountain Range, a grouping supported by Juan José Pelayo Zepeda.

The Unity of Villages is opposing the indiscriminate felling of trees in the *Ejido* (government-owned land inhabited and worked by peasants) of Telcruz, municipality of Cuautitlán. They have also opposed the anti-drug operations directed by the military and members of the *Procuraduría General de la República*, (PGR), Attorney General's Office, during which there are reported to have been many instances of human rights violations against the indigenous population.

There are fears that more community and peasant activists in the area could be targeted in the near future.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The *Ejido* of Telcruz is the biggest in Jalisco State with 54,000 inhabitants in 800 families. Land disputes and confrontations with the *caciques* reportedly responsible for the felling of trees and *narcosiembra*, the planting of narcotics, have been the main problem in this *Ejido*. The *Unión de Pueblos de la Sierra de Manantlán* and Juan José Pelayo Zepeda been actively involved in confronting these problems.

The failure to bring to justice those responsible for human rights violations throughout Mexico 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.

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

- condemning the threats against Juan José Pelayo Zepeda, reportedly made as a result of his activities on behalf of the indigenous and peasant communities of Jalisco State;
- calling for measures to guarantee his safety and for a prompt and full investigation into these threats, asking to be kept informed of any findings;
- expressing deep alarm about the continuing human rights violations against human rights defenders and indigenous peasants in Mexico;
- asking what action is currently being taken to put a stop to these incidents 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 5 271 1764 or + 52 5 515 1794 or 542 1648**  
**Salutation: Sr. Presidente / Dear President**

**2) Governor of the State of Jalisco**

Lic. Alberto Carlos Jimenez  
Gobernador del Estado de Jalisco  
Palacio de Gobierno, Guadalajara, Jalisco  
MEXICO  
**Telegrams: Gobernador Jalisco, México**  
**Salutation: Sr. Gobernador/Dear Governor**

**3) Attorney General of the Republic**

Lic. Jorge Madrazo Cuellar  
Procuraduría General de la República  
Paseo de la Reforma y Violeta  
Col. Guerrero  
06300 México D.F., MEXICO  
**Telegrams: Sr. Procurador de la República, México D.F.**  
**Fax: (+52 5) 626 4419/4430**  
**Salutation: Sr. Procurador de la República/Dear Attorney**

**COPIES TO:**

**1) Human Rights Organization**

Academia Jalisciense de Derechos Humanos  
Mezquitán 777-6, Sector Hidalgo  
Departamento 6  
CP 44200, Guadalajara, Jalisco  
MEXICO  
**Tel/Fax: +52 3 614 5960**

**2) Local Newspaper**

Periódico Siglo XXI  
Av. Washington 250-A  
Col. Moderna  
Guadalajara, Jalisco  
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 23 January 1997.