

# WORLDWIDE appeals

January 2005

## MEXICO

### RAPE WITH IMPUNITY



Valentina Rosendo Cantú (*right*) and Inés Fernández Ortega (*left*), members of the Tlapaneca indigenous group, were reportedly raped by members of the Mexican army in February and March 2002 respectively in the state of Guerrero, Mexico. Four other indigenous women have also filed complaints of rape by soldiers in Guerrero in the last 10 years. However, in none of the cases have those responsible been brought to justice. Instead of taking steps to carry out full and impartial investigations, military investigators have

attempted to disprove the rape allegations, placing the burden of proof on the victim, and flouted international standards.

Serious flaws in the investigation procedures relating to lodging and ratifying a complaint, visiting the crime scene, identity parades, protection of witnesses, and medical examinations have been reported in all the cases. There has been virtually no oversight of the proceedings and no accountability.

As well as a military judicial system that is incapable of delivering justice, Valentina Rosendo and Inés Fernández have also been subjected to poor medical care and substandard forensic examinations.

The impunity and discrimination that surround these cases have a direct impact on women and indigenous communities in Guerrero, where the heavy presence of the military acts as a reminder of their trauma and generates fear. Other women are reluctant to report complaints. AI's report *Mexico: Indigenous women and military*

*injustice* (AMR 41/033/2004), highlights the serious shortcomings in the investigations conducted by Mexican military prosecutors and the fundamental unsuitability of the military justice system to investigate human rights violations committed by members of the armed forces.

☐ **Please write**, asking the government to ensure that the cases of Valentina Rosendo Cantú and Inés Fernández Ortega are investigated and tried in the civilian justice system as recommended by international human rights mechanisms. Call on the government to restrict military justice and take action to prevent violence against women by introducing accountability, transparency and an end to impunity.

Send appeals to: President of the Republic of Mexico, Lic. Vicente Fox Quesada, Presidente de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos, Residencia Oficial de "Los Pinos", Col. San Miguel Chapultepec, México D.F., C.P. 11850, Mexico. Fax: + 52.55 50911113  
E-mail: webadmon@op.presidencia.gob.mx

## TURKMENISTAN

### FORCIBLY DETAINED IN A PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL

Gurbandurdy Durdykulyiev (*right*), aged 63, has been forcibly detained in a psychiatric hospital since February 2004. AI considers him a prisoner of conscience and is also concerned about his health.

Gurbandurdy Durdykulyiev sent a letter, in January 2004, to President Niyazov and the Governor of the Balkan region, urging them to authorize a peaceful demonstration critical of government policies. He called on them to refrain from using force against the participants. He had previously criticized President Niyazov's policies in interviews with US-funded *Radio Liberty*, and had openly spoken about the need to form an opposition political party in the country.

In February 2004, Gurbandurdy Durdykulyiev was taken from his home in the village of

Suvchy, in western Turkmenistan, reportedly by about six medical personnel and six plain-clothes police officers. He is now forcibly detained in a psychiatric hospital in the east of the country, hundreds of kilometres from his home.

He was officially diagnosed as suffering "wild paranoia in an aggressive form" but several medical staff at the hospital reportedly told his relatives that they had found no sign of mental illness but had been pressurized by the authorities to diagnose him as mentally ill.

His wife was eventually given permission to visit him in April. However, she was warned by staff at the hospital that if she passed on information about her husband's case to the international media, she would not be allowed to visit him again. When she travelled across

the country in October to see him she was refused access.

The government of Turkmenistan does not tolerate any dissent. No opposition political parties or human rights groups can operate and dissidents are routinely persecuted.

☐ **Please write**, calling for the immediate and unconditional release of prisoner of conscience Gurbandurdy Durdykulyiev.

Send appeals to: Prezident Turkmenistana Saparmurad A. Niyazov, Apparat Prezidenta, 744000 Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. Fax: +993 12 35 51 12



## MYANMAR

### IMPRISONED FOR SPEAKING OUT

U Sein Hla Oo, 66 years old, a newspaper editor and member of parliament for the National League for Democracy (NLD), has been detained for more than 10 years. He was imprisoned for speaking to foreign diplomats and journalists about the political situation in the country, and for possessing documents produced by opposition political groups in exile.

The NLD won more than 82 per cent of the vote in Myanmar in 1990, but the authorities refused to transfer power to them. Their members and supporters have been subjected to repeated imprisonment, short-term detention and harassment. U Sein Hla Oo is a senior party official.

U Sein Hla Oo was arrested in August 1994 and sentenced to seven years'

imprisonment. He is also serving the remainder of a previous prison sentence because the authorities said he had "breached his promise and secretly carried out anti-government activities". He is being held in a prison in the far north of the country, several days' journey from his family. He is reported to suffer from high blood pressure and a hernia. Prisoners in distant prisons are reliant on family members for extra food and medicine.

In November the authorities suspended the sentences of nearly 10,000 prisoners. About 40 of them are believed to be political prisoners, many of whom were due to be released soon. However, there remain more than 1,300 who have been sentenced after unfair trials, often under security legislation and often solely for

peaceful acts of dissent. For information on other individuals wrongfully imprisoned, see *Myanmar: Facing imprisonment: Prisoners of concern to Amnesty International* (ASA 16/007/2004) also on AI's website [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

☐ **Please write**, calling for the immediate and unconditional release of prisoner of conscience U Sein Hla Oo and others detained for peacefully expressing their views. Express concern that he was sentenced after an unfair trial under legislation which has been used to silence peaceful dissent, and call for a moratorium on the use of this and other security legislation.

Send appeals to: Senior General Than Shwe, State Peace and Development Council, Ministry of Defence, Dagon Post Office, Yangon, Myanmar.

A P P E A L S

*An appeal to the authorities can help the victims of human rights violations whose stories are told here. You can help free a prisoner of conscience or stop torture. You can bring liberty to a victim of "disappearance". You may prevent an execution. Every appeal counts.*